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Otto Penzler on *Banquo's Ghosts*

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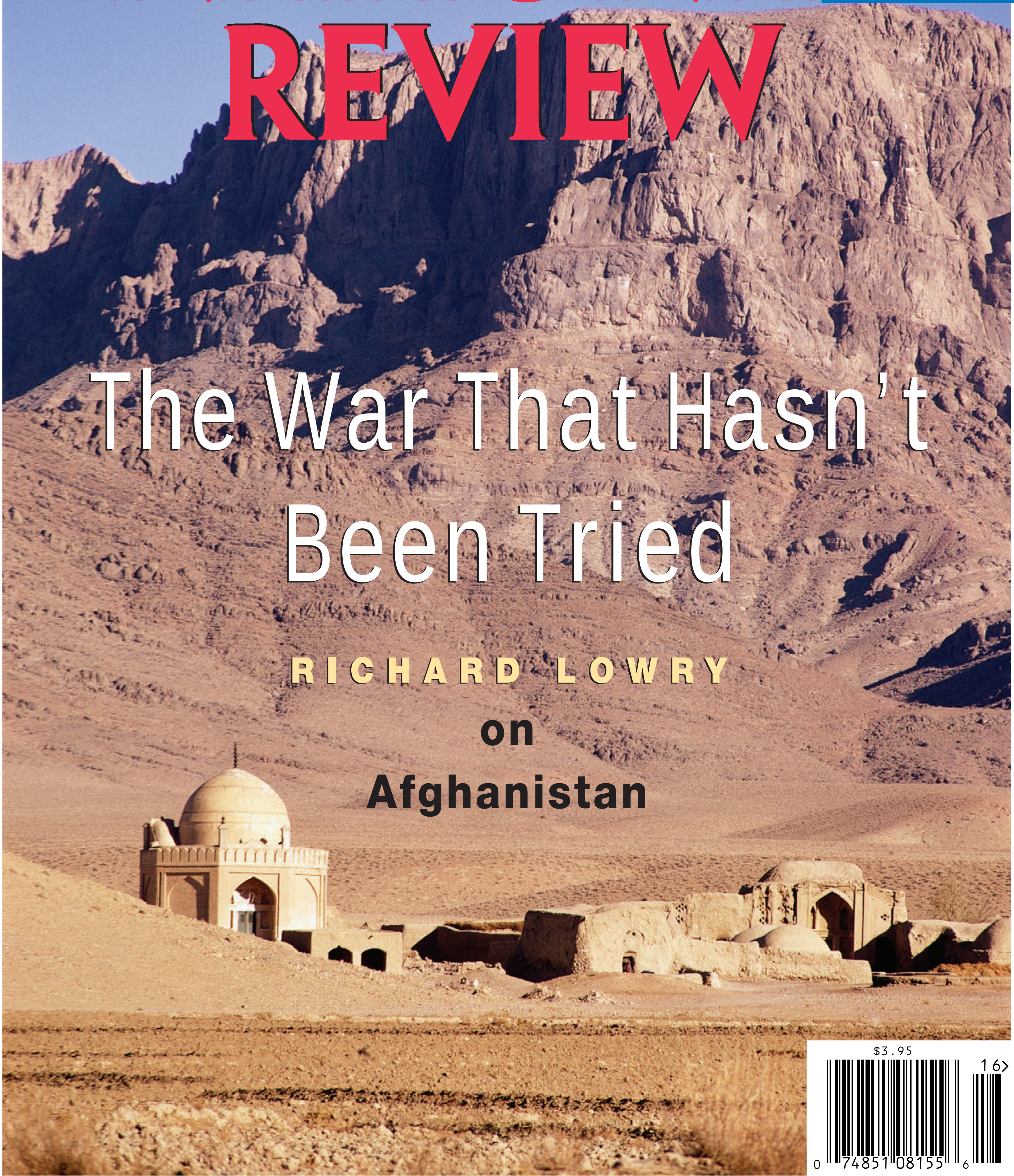
HOW TO OPPOSE OBAMA
—Ponnuru



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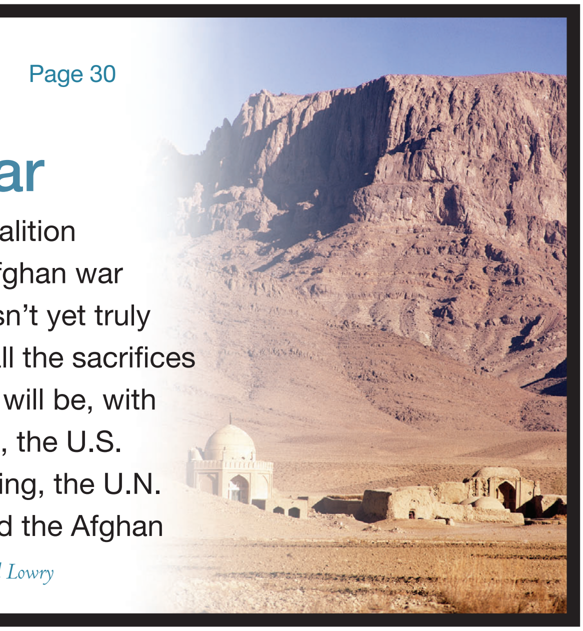

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Letters

Keeping the Peace

In the April 6 issue's "The Week," you ran a paragraph about the recent attacks on soldiers and policemen in Northern Ireland. The piece unfairly and incorrectly stated that the "Troubles" have never really ended. True, tensions still exist between Nationalists and Unionists, but the peace process that achieved the Good Friday Agreement (1998) and the subsequent IRA disarmament and regional devolution is still intact and extremely successful.

What's more, the radical mosquito groups responsible for the attacks not only lack popular support, but also lack the support of old Republican hardliners.

Christopher D. Mercado
Merrillville, Ind.

THE EDITORS REPLY: The Good Friday Agreement has been better than nothing, but an imperfect instrument all the same. The Stormont parliament had to be suspended, for instance. And under cover of the agreement, fortified walls separating the communities remain in place, and low-level communal violence has persisted. Dissident IRA groups are estimated to be 300 strong, enough to do much harm, and too many to be dismissed as "mosquito."

The Reality Is Much Worse

In the March 9 issue I read "The Long View," by Rob Long, which consisted of excerpts from the unread parts of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Was this a joke or a serious article? I was appalled at what I read and wanted to find out if I had been fooled. Would you please clarify this for me? When I called up the bill online to search for these parts I couldn't find them, though it showed only 407 pages of the whole thing.

Pat McDonald
Snellville, Ga.

ROB LONG REPLIES: I'm ashamed to say I made up those excerpts out of whole cloth. Entirely my own fancy and conjecture. The actual American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is a lot funnier.

Correction

In "Democrats and Businessmen, Sitting in a Tree . . ." (April 6), Jonah Goldberg stated that GE had spent $20 billion on lobbying in 2008. The correct figure is $20 million.

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com.

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The Week

■ Carter-era Fiat: Fix It Again, Tony. Obama-era Fiat: Fix It Again, Taxpayers.

■ "What's good for the country is good for General Motors," Charles Wilson, the company's president in the 1940s and early 1950s, is supposed to have said. But it was not until TARP that General Motors and the country were fused, as GM and Chrysler pleaded to be on the federal teat. President Obama's dismissal of CEO Rick Wagoner was a predictable consequence; who pays the piper calls the tune. Obama was even tougher on Chrysler, telling it to find a viable partner (he suggested Fiat) or fold. These were salutary shocks: Bankruptcy would have administered them earlier, and delay has cost the taxpayer billions in interim life support. Will the Obama administration keep pushing? Many in it hope to use the auto crisis as an occasion for creating budget-busting green cars, and the United Auto Workers will not want its membership gutted. Political considerations inevitably displace economic ones when the government itself takes on the responsibility of micromanaging economic decisions.

■ The special election in New York's 20th congressional district, for a seat vacated by newly appointed Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, won't be decided for a while. Democrat Scott Murphy had a 65-vote edge over Republican Jim Tedisco, but 6,000 absentee ballots have to be counted. The election was billed, not very convincingly, as an early referendum on Obama's first 70 days. Should the Democrats have won it because they held the seat, or should the Republicans have won it because it had been a GOP district before Gillibrand's first victory in 2006? Pundits will have to get their augurs elsewhere.

■ First, the House passed a 90 percent tax targeted at AIG bonuses. Obama was right to resist that mob maneuver, which has faded. Now, Rep. Barney Frank is attempting an even bigger power play: Recently introduced legislation would give congressional overseers the power to set wages for all employees—not just highly paid executives—at firms in which the government now has a capital interest, meaning that Washington will reserve the right to approve a 5 percent raise for a $10-an-hour drive-thru teller in Toad Suck, Ark. We think this proposal is imprudent but not indefensible: You take Uncle's money, you get Uncle's interference. What is indefensible is Representative Frank's frankly expressed desire to have Congress remodel the entire compensation structure for the financial-services industry, regardless of whether the firms in question have received government money. The itch to control is as boundless as greed.

■ The president continues to say that he wants Congress to enact a cap on carbon emissions this year. But the Senate looks less and less likely to give him what he wants. In part, that is because the Democratic majority includes many lawmakers from states that depend on coal either for power or for money. It is also because Obama's bill would inflict severe economic pain in return for benefits that are small, notional, and distant. Let us therefore hope that Obama uses up as much political capital on this issue as possible before moving on to health care.

See page 6

ROMAN GENN

■ We once called Arlen Specter "the worst Republican senator." We're still not fans, but we did breathe a sigh of relief when the "moderate" senator decided he'd vote against the Employee Free Choice Act—denying Democrats the 60 votes they'd need to force a vote on the bill, which would essentially eliminate the secret ballot in union elections and give government arbiters the right to impose contract terms on workers and employers. There's a lot of fighting yet to do, but it's nice to see Specter allying with his own party, even temporarily.

■ The Social Security surplus has vanished, not that anyone has noticed. In February, the program paid out more in benefits than it received in payroll taxes. When the economy recovers, a surplus may reappear temporarily. But the decades of using the payroll-tax surplus to finance the rest of the government have now come to an end. The Democrats, who have spent the last few years insisting that the program will be fine until the 2040s, are left holding the bag. Or, rather, we are.

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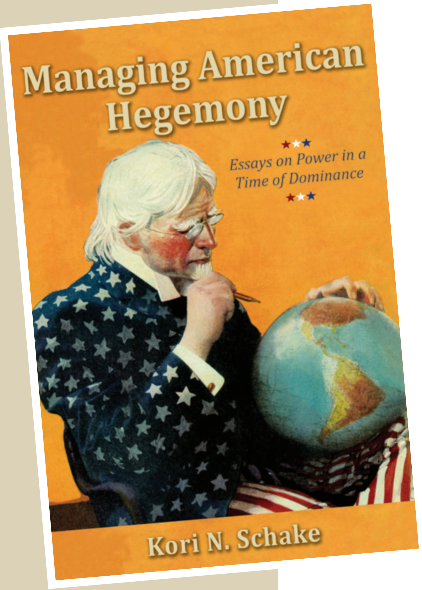
Managing American Hegemony
Essays on Power in a Time of Dominance
Kori N. Schake

Managing American Hegemony

Essays on Power in a Time of Dominance

BY KORI N. SCHAKE

Schake examines key questions about the United States' position of power in the world, including Why is the United States' power so threatening? Is it sustainable? Does military force still matter? How can we revise current practices to reduce the U.S. cost of managing the system? What accounts for the United States' stunning success in the round of globalization that swept across the international order at the end of the twentieth century? The author also offers suggestions on which issues the next president should focus on to build an even stronger foundation of U.S. power.

She concludes that the United States has succeeded internationally for reasons deeply rooted in the political culture of the country, namely, tolerance of risk and failure, veneration of individual initiative, encouragement of immigration, fewer constraints on social and economic mobility than most other countries, and—critically—a malleable, absorptive definition of itself.

Kori N. Schake is senior policy adviser to the McCain campaign. She is on leave from being a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Distinguished Professor of International Security Studies at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

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■ Everyone knows that the Catholic Church opposes abortion, but the basis and implications of its teaching are surprisingly unfamiliar to many people and even many Catholics. They see that the Church considers abortion immoral but not that it also considers abortion gravely unjust—which is why pro-choice Catholics who claim to agree with their Church about abortion are simply mistaken. Whether or not pro-choicers (of any faith or none) themselves personally wish anyone to have an abortion, all of them by definition wish for unborn children to do without the legal protections against deliberate homicide that apply to everyone else. This widespread confusion provides the backdrop for the controversy over the University of Notre Dame's invitation to President Obama to give the commencement address and receive an honorary degree. The president favors keeping abortion legal at any stage of pregnancy, subsidizing abortion, funding experiments that kill human embryos, and allowing the killing of previable infants who survive abortions. He pledges to appoint Supreme Court justices who will prevent legislators from correcting the injustice of our abortion laws. He speaks of common ground but has shown no interest at all in compromise. Notre Dame's invitation sends the message, intentional or not, that the radical injustice of abortion is a matter of interest only to Catholics, and perhaps not even all that much to them.

■ House Republicans stumbled into a PR disaster when they rushed out a half-baked budget blueprint in response to the Obama administration's taunts that they were the "Party of No." The 19-page document contained no numbers or deficit projections, but it did have a few charts depicting platitudinous solutions springing from a box labeled "Republican Road to Recovery." Republicans need to come up with fresh policy ideas, but they need to take the time to get the details right

Overstimulated

The radicalism of the Obama administration has startled even European lefties. Writing in the *Guardian*, Jonathan Freedland remarked on the spectacle: "[Obama] and Brown stand together, supposedly the representatives of Anglo-American turbocapitalism, struggling to push the statist French and Germans—and this is the bit that was in nobody's script—leftward."

President Bush seemed to revel in the European indignation his policies aroused, but Obama seems genuinely surprised. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in his failed attempt to convince Europeans to launch Keynesian atomic bombs at the economic crisis.

French president Nicolas Sarkozy made a classic French drama out of his rejection of "Obama-style" stimulus. Czech prime minister (and current head of the rotating EU presidency) Mirek Topolánek warned that Obama's plans could destabilize world markets, adding that "all of these steps, these combinations and permanency, is [*sic*] the road to hell."

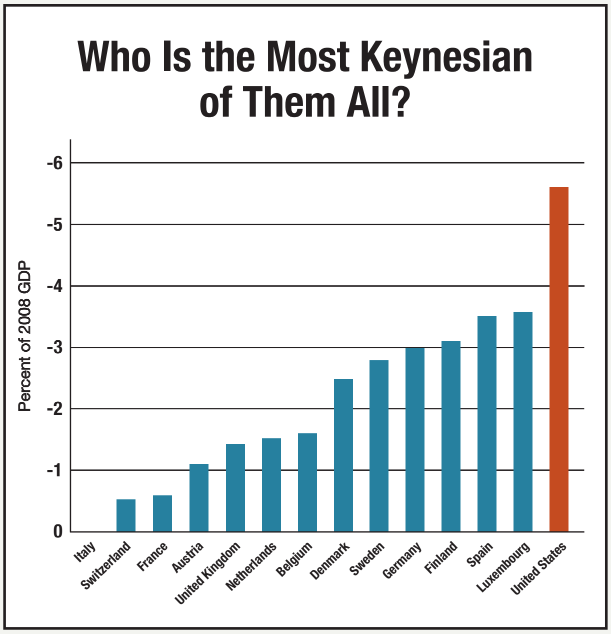
As a result, European policy has been fairly calm in this storm. The chart at right indicates how dramatically U.S. policy has diverged from world norms this year. It compares the fiscal impact of the stimulus package that Obama and the Democrats enacted to the impact of similar packages adopted by European countries from 2008 to 2010. In each case, the total impact is scaled by GDP.

Relative to GDP, the fiscal impact of the U.S. stimulus is nearly ten times larger than that of France, and almost double that of Germany. It is significantly larger than that of even the most Keynesian of European countries, Luxembourg. Obama may have a calm presence on television, but his economic policy looks like it has been driven by panic.

Europeans may have been reluctant to adopt massive Keynesian plans because their policy elite have become very data-driven. They know that such plans are unlikely to be effective. In addition, they recognize that stimulus today must eventually be paid for with higher taxes, and Europeans seem to cherish the competitive advantages associated with their low marginal tax rates.

America's Left spent the last century striving to drive the United States to the European model. But while they were doing that, the Europeans changed. Thus, we can expect another four years of classic European derision targeted at the American president. Only this time, it will be more fun.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT


Who Is the Most Keynesian of Them All?

SOURCE: "THE OECD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK INTERIM REPORT," OECD, MARCH 2009, HTTP://WWW.OECD.ORG/DATAOECD/3/62/42421337.PDF
NOTE: CHART SHOWS THE NET EFFECT OF STIMULUS PACKAGES ON FISCAL BALANCES FOR 2008–2010 AS PERCENTAGE OF 2008 GDP.

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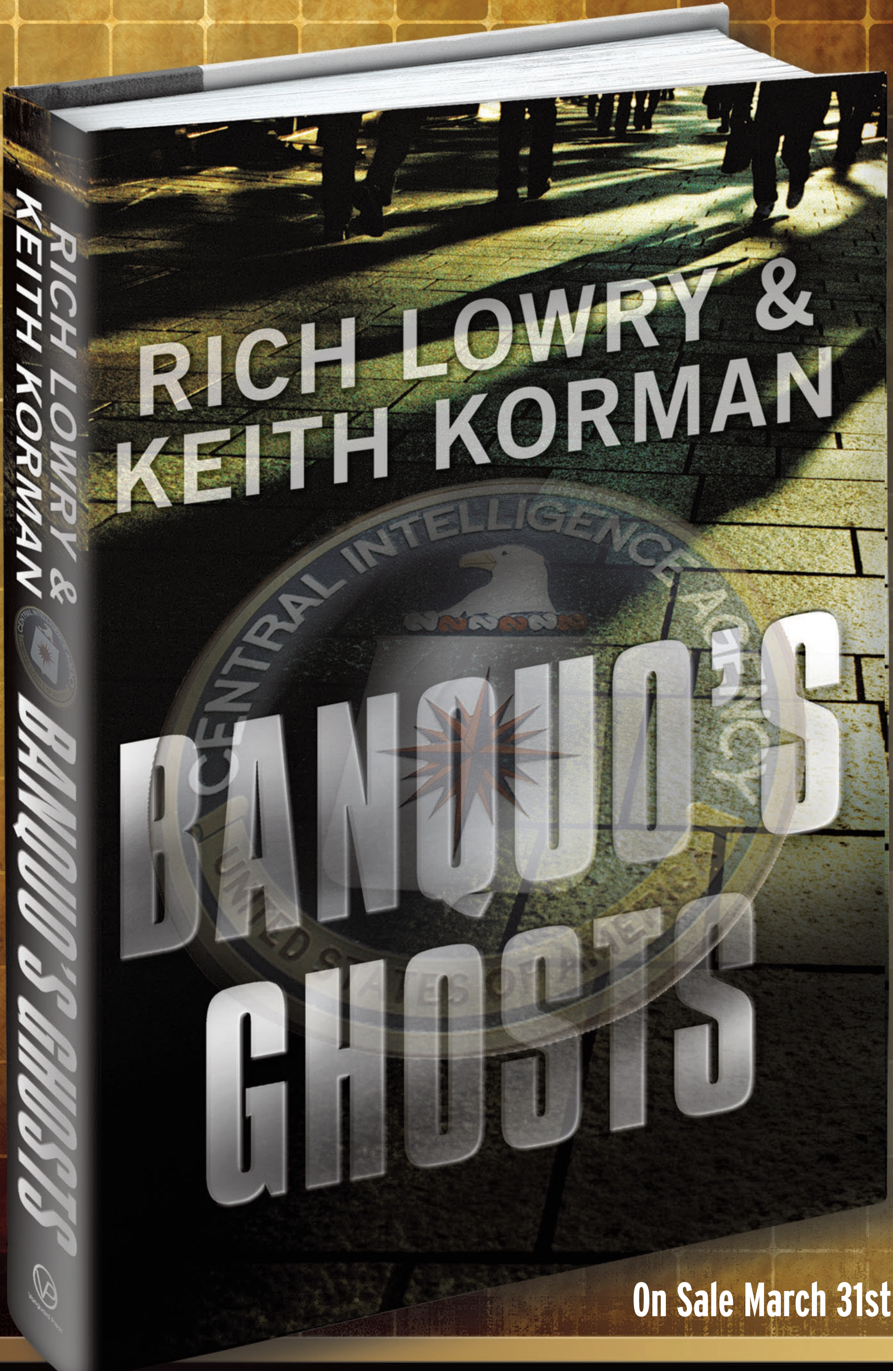
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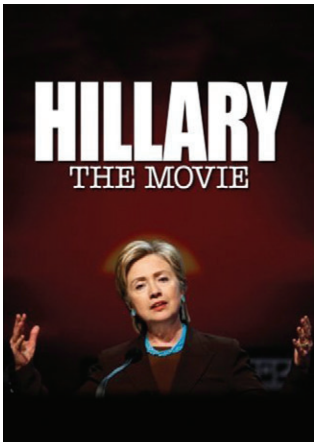
and not take the bait every time the administration tries to portray them as obstructionists. Obama's budget calls for the biggest tax and spending increases in American history. There's nothing wrong with saying no to that.

■ George Bush saw an "axis of evil": America confronted by a trio of rogue nations. Now, Barack Obama gives us the "axis of disobedience": America as *part of* a rogue trio—with Saddam Hussein's terrorist regime and Communist North Korea. That's the world according to Harold Hongju Koh, Yale Law School dean and Obama's choice for State Department legal adviser. The U.S. is a renegade, Koh argues, because it "disobeys" global authority. He'd ditch U.S. sovereign self-determination in favor of "a smoothly functioning international legal regime"—the kind where leftist grandstanders like Spain's Baltasar Garzón invoke "universal jurisdiction" to prosecute Bush officials for human-rights crimes (i.e., what used to be known as "national defense"). Koh would have the Constitution "evolve" to incorporate foreign-law norms—thus invalidating, for example, the death penalty and the right to own guns, while enforcing diktats from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. This is Obama's worst appointment, and that's saying something.

■ Though reputed to be extremely bright, Rep. Barney Frank (D., Mass.) has made a fool of himself in attacking Justice Antonin Scalia as "homophobic." Representative Frank maintained that he was not just hurling epithets at his opponents: Justice Clarence Thomas, he said, was an opponent of same-sex marriage but not a phobe. Scalia, in contrast, thought it was "a good idea" for governments to punish homosexual sex. Look through the case law, however, and you will find, first, that Justice Scalia merely ruled that states have the power to prohibit such behavior, not that they should exercise it; and second, that Justice Thomas endorsed Scalia's opinion while adding that in his view they should not exercise it. Our preliminary diagnosis is that Frank suffers from a case of blindness to the Constitution aggravated by logicphobia.

■ At a news conference held by retired admiral Dennis Blair, our new director of national intelligence, the issue of terrorists detained at Guantanamo Bay came up. What's the administration going to do with them? the DNI was asked. He replied, in part: "If we are to release them in the United States, you can't just . . . put them on the street . . . We need some sort of assistance to them to start a new life and not return to some of the conditions that may have inspired them in the first place." So apparently foreign terrorists are to receive stipends. What else are we to give them, free flying lessons?

■ The first to go was "enemy combatants." The Obama administration eliminated that term and made sure that everybody knew; after all, Americans don't want "enemy combatants" released into their neighborhoods, as will soon be done with some of Guantanamo's trained practitioners of terror. Sorry, did we say "terror"? That's out, too. Janet Napolitano, the secretary of homeland security, prefers to say "man-caused disaster," because "it demonstrates that we want to move away from the politics of fear"; like FDR, she seems to think that all we have to fear is fear itself. Presumably someone who perpetrates one of these acts will be called a "man-caused-disaster-causing man." The latest term sent down the memory hole for being too honest is "War on Terror." No replacement has been specified, though the bloodless phrase "Overseas Contingency Operation" is becoming popular around Foggy Bottom and the Pentagon. Obama got elected by endlessly repeating meaningful-sounding slogans that amounted to nothing at all. Now, in office, he is doing the opposite: attaching bland phrases to things of great consequence in hopes that it will make people forget their importance.



■ According to Obama administration lawyers, the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance law empowers the federal government to censor books and films if their content and funding do not conform to its stipulations. At issue is a film called *Hillary: The Movie*, a documentary produced by the nonprofit group Citizens United, which did not wish to see Senator Clinton elected president. McCain-Feingold prohibits so much as mentioning a candidate's name in pre-election communications paid for by unions or corporations, so the government forbade distribution of the film, which was to have been made available on a pay-per-view basis. The filmmakers sued, and the case, *Citizens United* v. *Federal Election Commission*, has been heard by the Supreme Court. In a remarkable exchange with Justice Alito, Deputy Solicitor General Malcolm Stewart argued that the law entitles the government to censor any political communication that runs afoul of McCain-Feingold's statutory requirements—and he is quite correct in that argument. The Supreme Court should agree and then nullify most of McCain-Feingold.

■ New Hampshire, which already has civil unions for same-sex couples, is considering treating such couples as though they were married. The Democratic governor, John Lynch, has said he may veto a same-sex-marriage bill. We hope that it does not come to that, but that he will follow through if it does. Governmental recognition of marriage is pointless except as a way to nurture the vital but delicate relationship between sex and the raising of children. Same-sex marriage does not expand the institution so much as empty it of content.

■ New York governor David Paterson and the state legislature have agreed to undo the last vestiges of the Rockefeller drug laws: 1970s legislation that imposed draconian penalties on drug offenders. The tough penalties went by the wayside five years ago; the new laws propose to give discretion in sentencing to judges, which worries prosecutors, with some reason: Will crooks who were also drug users or pushers get revolving-door doses of rehab, rather than hard time? New York's prison population is falling, even as crime rates remain low. "If you saw something that was so successful, why would you tinker with it?" asked the Staten Island DA. How to administer the law

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justly and humanely in the midst of a drug war is a conundrum that will be with us as long as the drug war is.

■ The trial of abortionist George Tiller resulted in no conviction, but it did serve to remind any who needed reminding of the seediness of the abortion racket. Tiller, who performs late-term abortions that kill viable babies, is required by Kansas law to do so only after receiving a second opinion from an independent physician. For this grim task he chose Dr. Ann Kristin Neuhaus, who during that time was operating with a restricted medical license because of controlled-substances violations—and she "needed the money," as Tiller wrote in his journal. Neuhaus was paid, in cash, by Tiller's patients, whose appointments with her were scheduled by Tiller's office, and she endorsed their abortions on forms drawn up by Tiller's attorneys. But she was, in the judgment of the jury, something short of a full-time employee, and so Tiller was acquitted of the charges against him. His license will be reviewed by a panel that rejoices in the title Kansas State Board of Healing Arts.

■ Bill "We Didn't Do Enough" Ayers was invited to speak at Boston College by two student groups (one of them was the College Democrats), but after talk-radio host Michael Graham kicked up a fuss, BC administrators cancelled the event, "out of concern for the safety and well being of our students." Perhaps they were worried that some student soul-mates of Ayers's might blow themselves up (that's happened before), or that they might blow other people up (that would have happened if the Weather Underground had been more competent bomb makers). Ayers has changed his m.o. over the years, preferring now to work as a termite in the bureaucracies of foundations and universities; he's a friend of the president of the United States. But his past is scarlet, and he regrets it only when it is necessary to make a show of contrition. Good for Graham for calling him out, and good for BC for dishonoring him.

■ Mickey Kaus, sprightly e-pundit, posts a thread from JournoList, the secret online barbershop where liberal pundits share story ideas, but so much more. How much more? Well, the thread—called "Breaking: Marty Peretz is a crazy-a** racist"—flays the editor-in-chief of *The New Republic*, wonders to what degree it is permissible to discuss the sex lives of (non-list) journalists, and weighs the relative sanity of Michael Savage and Keith Olbermann. It's as lively as a flock of crows, and as interesting as a collection of navel lint. Rob Long would write about it, but he's waiting until the JournoListers show up on Larry King.

■ In Mexico, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke of America's "shared responsibility" for the horrific drug violence now plaguing that nation: "We know very well that the drug traffickers are motivated by the demand for illegal drugs in the United States, that they are armed by the transport of weapons from the United States." Well, yes and no. She is right, of course, that the drug trade is demand-driven, but on the supposed flow of guns southward, she is on much shakier ground. At a recent Senate hearing, law-enforcement personnel testified that firearms smuggling from the U.S. is a minor problem, with most of the Mexican kingpins' guns coming from other sources. The *Los Angeles Times* says the drug gangs are switching to higher-powered weapons, most of which are "smuggled from Central American countries or by sea." Secretary Clinton's admission about supply and demand, which is obvious but too often denied or ignored, could be the basis for more sensible drug policies, but probably won't; her assertion about gun-running, which is questionable at best, should not be the basis for firearms policy, but probably will.

■ Clinton also visited the basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where she was given a special up-close viewing of the cloak on which Catholics believe that an image of the Virgin Mary was miraculously imprinted almost 500 years ago. Said Mrs. Clinton to the monsignor who was escorting her: "Who painted it?" "God," he answered. One does not have to agree with the monsignor to know that the image, displayed in millions of Mexican homes and stores, is a national icon, and that to show ignorance of it is rather like asking, on a visit to Valley Forge, say, or Gettysburg, "Now what happened here again?" We suspect that George W. Bush, former governor of Texas, would not have made such a mistake when he was representing the U.S., and we strongly suspect that if he had, the press would have been less charitable than it was to Mrs. Clinton—or than Our Lady was (for better reasons).

■ Daniel Hannan is one of a number of conspicuously bright young Conservatives in Britain. He happens to be a member of the European Parliament in Brussels, a splendid irony as he is a preeminent critic of the whole European project and deploys his great gift for the striking phrase to ridicule what's going on around him. In an address to the Brussels Parliament, British prime minister Gordon Brown as usual claimed that everything was fine because he has the economic crisis under his sole control. Daniel Hannan's reply was electrifying. "When you repeat in that wooden and perfunctory way, that our situation is better than others," he said in particularly choice language, "I have to tell you that you sound like a Brezhnev-era apparatchik giving the party line." A video showed Hannan's command performance and Brown squirming as he listened. Posted on YouTube, this video has been the sensation of the moment, with more than a million hits, and taken up by news outlets from Australia to America, including Rush Limbaugh. Hannan has helped boost himself into a future Conservative cabinet.

■ Watch the skies over the Pacific these days and you are likely to see an intercontinental missile with a range of 6,000 miles winging from North Korea over Japan and towards Hawaii. Satellite photos have confirmed that this missile has been on its launch pad for some time, and there may even be a second missile ready to go. The North Koreans say that they are merely putting a satellite into orbit, but truth for them is a variable concept, and everybody takes it for granted that this is a stage in the development of their nuclear weapon. The United Nations

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specifically bans North Korea from testing missiles and nuclear devices, and it would be possible, legal, and in the interests of world security to shoot down any and every North Korean missile. But South Korea opposes any such response and the Japanese limit themselves to saying that they might destroy any debris falling on them. The United States has sent two ships on a mission to observe, and in a television interview a flummoxed Secretary of Defense Robert Gates spelled out that there are no plans to take military action to halt the launching or to shoot any missiles down—unless one does actually head for Hawaii. Take comfort in that if you can.

■ In a (related?) development, at the behest of dictator Kim Jong-il, North Korea has opened its first pizzeria. We hear the Pyongyang eatery is preparing a promotional campaign: "Delivery radius of 6,000 miles—get it in 30 minutes, or it's free! Now delivering to Japan!"

■ The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is commonly known as "the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog." There are two main candidates to run it: Yukiya Amano of Japan and Abdul Minty of South Africa. The agency's board votes them in, and, in the early voting, neither man won the required two-thirds majority. As a *Wall Street Journal* article put it, "The deadlock reflects the different views of the IAEA's mission. Mr. Amano's candidacy was backed by developed countries in the European Union and the U.S. who emphasize the agency's role in monitoring the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. Mr. Minty found support in non-aligned developing countries that seek development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes." Shouldn't there be quotation marks around "peaceful"? (And what does "non-aligned" mean in the post–Cold War context, by the way?) It sounds like Mr. Amano is the better horse—but the IAEA should be taken with many grains of salt anyway. Someone will have to be watching the "watchdog," regardless. It can fall asleep on the job—which is one reason the George W. Bush administration had to create the Proliferation Security Initiative, which actually got results. See Libya.

The Islamic Republic of Iran: Obama said it twice, accepting the theocrats' view of Iran. That is not the view of most Iranians.

■ The Iranian new year is called "Nowruz," and President Bush used to send a message of solidarity to Iranians on that day. This year, President Obama did something quite different. He addressed his message to "the people and leaders of Iran." He did not go in much for freedom and democracy and all that Bushian jazz. Instead, he appealed to Iran for a relationship based on "mutual respect." Bear in mind, the Iranian government stones young girls to death for the crime of having been gang-raped. Just a day before Obama sent his message, we learned that a young Iranian blogger, Omid Mir Sayafi, had died in an Iranian prison: Evin, that torture chamber and graveyard for so many good people. An American journalist, Roxana Saberi, is being held in that prison right now. Her fate is unknown. In his Nowruz message, President Obama said, "The United States wants the Islamic Republic of Iran to take its rightful place in the community of nations." *The Islamic Republic of Iran*: Obama said it twice, accepting the theocrats' view of Iran. That is not the view of most Iranians. Obama's performance was of a piece with the interview he gave to al-Arabiya, the Middle Eastern television network, in his first days as president. Fouad Ajami wrote a column about that interview for the *Wall Street Journal*. It was headed, "Obama Tells Arabia's Despots They're Safe: America's diplomacy of freedom is officially over." We fear that Obama will learn the hard way that abasing ourselves does not advance our interests.

■ Almost miraculously, there is a youth orchestra in the Palestinian refugee camp at Jenin. At least there was. It was called Strings for Freedom, and they were conducted by Wafa Younis. Now Palestinian officials have shut down the orchestra, boarded up its rehearsal studio, and banned Ms. Younis from the camp. Why? She had taken the group to play for Holocaust survivors in Israel. As the Associated Press said, "The discord highlights both the distrust many Palestinians have of any engagement with Israel, as well as their reluctance to acknowledge Jewish historical suffering because of concerns that it weakens their own claim to this disputed land." There is a sickness in the Middle East—a sickness that says, "Playing music for Holocaust survivors is an act of treason." When this sickness will pass, no one knows.

■ Khaled Abu Toameh is a Palestinian journalist who knows as much about the Palestinian world as anybody: its history, its players, its contentions. He is also extraordinarily conscientious. So when he says something about thought on American campuses, it pays to listen. In an article for the Hudson Institute, he wrote, "During a recent visit to several university campuses in the U.S., I discovered that there is more sympathy for Hamas there than there is in Ramallah. Listening to some students and professors on these campuses, for a moment I thought I was sitting opposite a Hamas spokesman or a would-be suicide bomber. I was told, for instance, that Israel has no right to exist, that Israel's 'apartheid system' is worse than the one that existed in South Africa, and that Operation Cast Lead was launched only because Hamas was beginning to show signs that it was interested in making peace," etc. Welcome to American higher learning.

■ Ileana Ros-Lehtinen is the senior Republican on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Recently she issued a statement with several of her colleagues. It called for a cessation of U.S. funds to UNRWA. What is UNRWA? The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, set up to benefit one group of people: Palestinians. As Ros-Lehtinen & Co. wrote, "For six decades, the United States has voluntarily contributed billions of dollars" to UNRWA. "In return for our generous investment, UNRWA subverts our laws, aids violent Islamist extremists, propagandizes against our ally Israel and in favor of Hamas, and works with

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banks targeted by the United States for money laundering and terrorist financing." They suggested that Congress "cut off funding to UNRWA and use our foreign aid to advance, rather than undermine, American interests and values." Sounds good to us. And one more thing: Palestinians do not benefit from a U.N. agency that mires them in grievance rather than lifting them out of it.

■ Was there a more inspiring story last month than the people of Fargo, and other Red River towns, tirelessly filling and piling sandbags in hellacious weather, in a mostly successful attempt to stop the waters, swollen by rain and snow and jammed by ice, from flooding their homes and businesses? They showed the dogged relentlessness of some Fifties existentialist drama, and the pull-together can-do spirit of America: Camus meets Booth Tarkington. After the flood crested came the next danger: an early-spring snowstorm that threatened the improvised levees with wave damage. When Nature wants to overwhelm us, she simply does: the Black Death, Krakatoa. How nobly the people of the upper plains responded to their chance to fight her to a draw.

■ The image is lurid: a headless, goose-stepping soldier, pushing a Star of David whose front-most points are transformed into a shark's jaws, pursuing a tiny mother and child, labeled "Gaza," off a cliff. The Simon Wiesenthal Center said it mimicked "venomous anti-Semitic propaganda of the Nazi and Soviet eras." The cartoonist was Pat Oliphant, who wields a sharp pen, whatever his subject, and sticks up for fellow cartoonists who do the same (he defended *NR*'s Roman Genn). The issue is not the image, but the point of view: Israel is a brutal, destructive power, driving hapless Gazans to their deaths. This is increasingly the mainstream view of Israel, whenever it responds militarily to asymmetrical warfare, whether in Gaza, Lebanon, or the West Bank. One of the goals of asymmetrical warfare—launching terrorist provocations from civilian neighborhoods—is to create that impression. The transformation of Israel into an imperialist oppressor (cf. Chas Freeman, Mearsheimer and Walt) proceeds apace. How odd to find Pat Oliphant in a herd.

■ The little town of Eufaula, Ala., is home to Alatech Healthcare, which boasts on its website of being the "largest state-of-the-art condom production facility in the U.S." and "exclusive American supplier of condoms to USAID." That would be the U.S. Agency for International Development, which distributes millions of condoms to Third World nations via HIV-prevention programs. The agency, however, has announced plans to change suppliers. Alatech charges five cents per condom; USAID can get the item for two cents in China. Alatech CEO Lawrence Povlacs says that about 300 workers could lose their jobs as a result of the outsourcing. In this Age of Stimulus, should not the federal government display extra sensitivity towards decisions affecting American workers? And why are Chinese condoms so much cheaper? A theory comes to mind . . . but this is really not a suitable topic for ribbing.

■ Nagasaki resident Mr. Tsutomu Yamaguchi was on a business trip in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The atom bomb caught him in the open, and he was badly burned. After stumbling through the shattered city and its horrors for some hours, Mr. Yamaguchi managed to get on a train back to his home town. After treatment for his injuries, he dutifully reported back to work at his company in Nagasaki on the morning of August 9. His boss demanded an explanation for his bandaged appearance, and was incredulous when told of the destruction of Hiroshima (of which the Japanese media had said nothing). He had just lost his temper and accused Mr. Yamaguchi of lying when there was an almighty flash . . . Mr. Yamaguchi, now 93 years old, has been formally certified as one of the very few to have survived both nuclear blasts; and, of that few, to have been closest to both—about two miles in each case.

AT WAR

The Cautious Surge

BARACK OBAMA took a big step toward making the Afghan war his own with a speech explaining why he is sending an additional 21,000 troops.

Obama argued that we need the "comprehensive" approach of a full-scale counterinsurgency—encompassing security, governance, and development—rather than the narrow counterterrorism strategy some of his advisers favored. That minimalist strategy would have risked making all of Afghanistan into the equivalent of the tribal areas of Pakistan, where al-Qaeda operatives go unmolested except by the occasional Predator strike.

U.S. troops have been too thin on the ground and unable to hold areas after clearing them. That should change now, at least in crucial areas in the Pashtun South, where the Taliban is strongest. The summer will bring a tough season of fighting. The rest of the coalition effort has to be ramped up as well, with a greater civilian footprint, with more trainers for Afghan security forces, and with more focus on improving Afghan governance. Obama committed to all that.

Afghanistan need not make a grand leap into the First World for our effort to have been successful. It just needs to return to the relative stability of, say, 2004, or to a version of its golden period prior to the coups and the Soviet invasion of the 1970s. This is not merely a goo-goo project. If we do not want to keep a large force in Afghanistan for decades or to leave the country to the tender mercies of the Taliban and its allies, we need to foster an Afghan government competent enough to field a substantial army and decent enough not to send disaffected Afghans into the arms of the insurgency.

It is an important fight not just because we want to deny al-Qaeda safe havens again in Afghanistan, but because the future of Pakistan is caught up in it. If we demonstrate staying power in Afghanistan and stabilize the situation, it will be a blow to the extremists threatening the nuclear-armed Pakistani state. But our work in Afghanistan is made all the harder by the non-cooperation of the Pakistani government, and the active support for the insurgency by its security service, the ISI. Obama promised to impose more accountability on the Pakistani government at the same time as he called for more aid to the country—another $1.5 billion a year for the next five years. We hope he can manage to get the Pakistanis to perform rather than just vacuuming up our aid dollars as they play the same old double game.

What is most disturbing about Obama's position is the hint of hedging. Commanding general David McKiernan had asked for even more troops. Obama approved only part of his request, preferring to wait and make a call on the balance later. But it will likely get politically harder, not easier, to send them. Obama declined to explicitly endorse an expensive doubling of Afghan security forces, as some in his administration have advocated, saying only that further "increases in Afghan forces may very well be needed." And he talked of benchmarks for progress in the war, a politically seductive notion that proved useless at best—and often counterproductive—in the Iraq War.

Obama's strategic review is a start. Much will depend on how he performs later, when the Left is more restive and the politics of the war more parlous.

THE GEITHNER PLAN

Toxic for Taxpayers

TREASURY SECRETARY TIM GEITHNER finally released the details of his plan to create a public-private partnership to buy toxic assets from banks. It is unfortunately as bad as we thought it would be. Intentionally or not, the plan is structured to transfer, as much as possible, the losses on bad assets to taxpayers.

It would work like this. The Treasury would partner with private entities, such as hedge funds, to buy pools of mortgage-backed securities from banks. More than 80 percent of each purchase would be financed through a non-recourse loan from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, using the assets as collateral. Any assets that appreciate in price would yield profits that the Treasury and the private entities would split 50/50. Any assets that go bad could be forfeited to the FDIC, with the taxpayer eventually eating the loss.

It is no mystery why the markets liked this proposal. For investors, it presents an opportunity to buy the best of the banks' distressed assets for less than they are probably worth. For the banks, it presents an opportunity to offload their most toxic paper for more than it is probably worth. The investors get to keep the good assets; the taxpayers get stuck with the junk.

Geithner's plan also faces two logistical problems. First, mark-to-market accounting rules might cause the plan to backfire. Let's say a healthier bank like Wells Fargo decides to take advantage of this program and sell a pool of mortgage-backed securities to Geithner and Co. for 70 cents on the dollar. This becomes the new market price for these assets, even if their underlying value—the cash flow from people paying their mortgages—turns out to be higher. Mark-to-market rules would force a weaker firm like Citigroup to mark its assets to the new price, which could precipitate the collapse we are trying to avoid.

The government could dodge this problem by temporarily loosening mark-to-market rules—something policymakers are finally showing an inclination to do. But that wouldn't solve the second problem: The plan relies on the heroic assumption that the government can still find willing partners in the private sector after last month's Bonusgate inquisition, in which the House reacted to public outrage over compensation at AIG by passing a 90 percent retroactive tax on bonuses paid to employees at bailed-out firms.

If anything, Geithner's public-private partnership would be more offensive than the AIG bonuses: It would very plainly use taxpayer funds to finance new Wall Street fortunes. How many news stories do you think it would take to generate hearings, public recriminations, and *ex post facto* laws targeting those fortunes? How many investors want to find out?

THE G20 MEETING

Globaloney

NOBODY expects much to come out of the Group of 20 meeting of the leaders of the world's largest economies, thank goodness. There are too many different agendas at play, and all of them are destructive. President Obama would like an internationally coordinated fiscal stimulus. French president Nicolas Sarkozy wants international financial regulations. The Chinese and Russians want to displace the dollar as the world's reserve currency.

Within the Keynesian model, international fiscal coordination makes sense: Otherwise the stimulators end up partially subsidizing non-stimulators. But many G20 countries rightly worry about rising debt and rightly doubt the power of fiscal stimulus. Within limits, international financial regulation makes sense, as when setting capital standards for companies with global operations. But previous attempts at international financial standards have arguably made the current crisis worse, so we should tread more carefully than Sarkozy seems inclined to do.

China has expressed reasonable concern about the future of the dollar—which is to say, concern that the U.S. will be tempted to inflate its currency to reduce the real value of its foreign debt. But there are no serious candidates for replacements for the dollar. Who would issue the new monetary unit? Far the better course would be for the U.S. to bring down its long-term debt by reining in the growth of its entitlement spending.

If the G20 leaders cannot do much useful as a group to advance global economic recovery, they can at least refrain from impeding it. Protectionist pressures are predictably rising in all of the afflicted countries.

Free trade and entitlement reform may not match the political needs of any of these leaders or the mood of the public. They are nonetheless the right prescription.

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How We Fight

The right way to take on the Obama administration

BY RAMESH PONNURU

THE Republican party is now consolidated in its opposition to President Obama. Most of its members have decided that his central political project is to bring social democracy to these shores. While bipartisanship may be possible on a case-by-case basis, Republicans cannot cooperate in that project. The party's congressmen were nearly unanimous in rejecting the Obama-Pelosi stimulus, and Republican voters' approval of the new president has dropped quite a bit.

The consolidation of the opposition party is not enough to guarantee its success. Republicans are a minority in the country and the Congress. Independents and disaffected Democrats would have to join them for Obama to suffer legislative or electoral defeats. But broad Republican unity is a precondition for those outcomes. If a sizable minority of congressional Republicans had voted for the stimulus, the party's odds of making gains in this year's elections or next year's would be much lower. So too if the passage of the stimulus had been accompanied by rising support for Obama among Republican voters. In either scenario, division and demoralization would have fed on each other.

As it is, Republican officeholders are no longer worried that voters will punish them for taking on Obama's agenda. But they are acutely aware that they have to pick their battles. "One has to do triage on bad ideas," says conservative activist Grover Norquist. "A bunch of bad ideas are just going to happen because [Democrats] have the votes." On some issues, though, Obama might have to withdraw or moderate his proposals. On others, Republicans might lose but still help their long-term prospects.

Republicans have achieved near-unanimity on two items. If Democrats try to bring back the "Fairness Doctrine," Republicans will respond furiously. That regulation would require radio stations to present politically balanced commentary, which, given the long-running failure of liberal talk radio, would mean the end of the only medium that conservatives have dominated. Leading Democrats know that raising this issue would stir up more trouble for them than enthusiasm, but bureaucratic attempts to achieve the goals of the Fairness Doctrine under a different name cannot be ruled out.

Senate Republicans are also united against labor's number-one priority this year: a set of labor-law changes that, among other things, would make it possible for unions to start representing workforces without secret-ballot elections. Moderate Republicans who oppose the bill will draw attacks from unions. But defense of the secret ballot gives them a powerful argument. Arlen Specter, the Pennsylvania moderate, was the last Senate Republican to hold out the possibility of supporting the bill. But he is facing a conservative primary challenge—he was one of three Republicans to support the stimulus—and announced his opposition. If the Republicans hold firm, they can successfully filibuster the bill.

Even though Republicans are slightly less unified on the president's proposal to cap carbon emissions, it too is in serious danger. Some Republicans, such as Sen. John McCain, support the idea. But industrial-state Democrats are balking. A prolonged debate on the subject probably would not help the bill's chances. Even voters who fear global warming are unwilling to see their energy bills rise a lot to mitigate far-off risks. The recession is also making the environment a lower priority for voters. Selling emissions permits would raise a lot of money for the government, so losing on cap-and-trade might force Obama to scale back some of his spending promises. If Congress also rejects Obama's proposal to raise taxes on charitable donations and mortgage interest, Obama's hole gets deeper.

On three other issues, Obama is more likely to get his way. The most consequential of these issues is health care. Republicans worry that liberal health-care reform would make voters more dependent on government and thus better disposed toward liberal policies and politicians. But voters and businesses are unhappy with the current system, Democrats are united, at least at the moment, and some Republicans are tempted to compromise.

Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah has recently said that he would like to get a health-care bill enacted as a tribute to his ailing friend, Sen. Ted Kennedy. Chuck Grassley, the leading Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, has expressed interest in a deal. And several Republicans—including Bob Bennett of Utah and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina—have endorsed a bill that purports to deliver universal health coverage through the private sector. It does

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this by turning private insurers into heavily regulated public utilities and forcing people to buy their products.

Most Republicans will find it hard to embrace that position. But Republican strategists nearly uniformly believe that Republicans cannot get by without presenting a big health-care reform of their own. To be attractive, that alternative must help more people buy insurance, make that insurance cheaper, and make it easier for people to take their insurance with them from job to job. It need not, however, cover absolutely everyone—and probably should not, given the mandates and costs associated with universality.

There is nothing Republicans can do to keep taxes from rising. The Bush tax cuts are already scheduled to expire. Republicans can, however, resist any tax increases beyond the restoration of the late-Clinton-era tax code. States are already raising taxes to deal with their budget crunches, and not just taxes on high earners. "If people get mad about taxes, they don't sit back and carefully think through if they're mad at the state legislature or the county assessor or the federal government," says influential former Republican congressman Vin Weber. "They just get mad about taxes." Which is likely bad news for Democrats.

Another thing Republicans cannot do is to keep liberal activists off the federal bench. In the Bush years many of them went on record saying that it is unfair, and maybe even unconstitutional, to deny confirmation to judicial nominees who had the support of 51 senators. They cannot all credibly flip-flop now. What Republicans can do, however, is to spotlight the most outrageous nominees, particularly the ones who have shown a proclivity for using judicial power to promote liberal social values, and use adverse publicity to block them. They can also spend time making the case for a judiciary confined to its proper constitutional role. An extended, slowed-down debate on judicial nominees is in the party's interest. (And if it takes time away from the rest of Obama's agenda, so much the better.)

Republicans should beware of getting bogged down in procedural arguments. Because centrist pundits are questioning whether Obama has put too many issues on his plate, Republicans are echoing that concern. They are also criticizing Democrats who suggest using procedural maneuvers to enact sweeping legislation on health care and the environment with a simple majority vote of the Senate. The more they make these arguments, though, the more Republicans will come across as mere obstructionists rather than as principled opponents of Obama's agenda. The public will not follow inside-the-Beltway debates about the proper scope of "budget reconciliation" in congressional rules. Republicans should not let such wrangling overshadow their case on the merits against Obama's plans.

Surprising issues will pop up between now and the 2010 elections. Nobody would have predicted in January 1993 that President Clinton's choice of a surgeon general would become a serious political liability, and nobody much remembers that appointee, Joycelyn Elders, now. But she became a high-profile illustration of the administration's determination to push the envelope on cultural liberalism. Republicans should keep an eye out for such issues.

The conventional wisdom is that Republicans cannot take either the House or the Senate in 2010, and that in the Senate in particular "the map" will work against them: More Republican seats will be up for grabs than Democratic ones. But "the map" didn't favor Democrats in 2006, and few people thought they would take the Senate as well as the House, and yet they did. We don't know what the political environment in the fall of 2010 will be. But credible Republican candidates are considering Senate races to take Democratic seats in Connecticut, North Dakota, Delaware, Illinois, Nevada, and New York. (In Delaware, Republican congressman Mike Castle leads Beau Biden, the vice president's son.) If Republicans take a few of these seats—all currently or formerly held by high-ranking Democrats, none of them Southern—the party's revival will be well underway. One test for Michael Steele, the new party chairman, will be whether he gives these candidates the resources they need.

"This is a good environment for recruiting [candidates]," says former RNC chairman Ed Gillespie. "There's a sense out there for Republicans of rising fortunes. The pendulum may be about to swing soon."

Gillespie (like other Republican strategists I consulted) does not overstate the Republican recovery. He understands that President Obama and the Democrats are not in serious political danger. Yet. **NR**

Robbing Bismarck to Pay Boston

Cap-and-trade is an interstate wealth-transfer program

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

On June 6, 2008, the U.S. Senate rejected a motion to end debate on the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act, which would have established a "cap and trade" (CAT) system to regulate greenhouse-gas emissions and set ambitious targets for emissions cuts. That same day, ten Democratic senators who opposed the bill—nine of whom had nonetheless voted in favor of cloture "to help their party save face," as *Time* reported—sent a letter to Harry Reid, the Senate majority leader, and Barbara Boxer, chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, expressing their concerns.

In their letter, the ten lawmakers called CAT "perhaps the most significant endeavor undertaken by Congress in over 70 years." They argued that the final legislation should include strong provisions to (among other things) reduce the costs of carbon-capping, spread the burdens "across states and regions," safeguard American manufacturing jobs, protect working families, boost spending on energy technologies, and ensure the responsible use of CAT revenues.

All ten of those Democrats—Evan Bayh (Ind.), Sherrod Brown (Ohio), Carl Levin (Mich.), Blanche Lincoln (Ark.), Claire McCaskill (Mo.), Ben Nelson (Neb.), Mark Pryor (Ark.), Jay Rockefeller (W.Va.), Debbie Stabenow (Mich.), and Jim Webb (Va.)—are still in the Senate. The debate over Lieberman-Warner spurred them to form a "Gang of 16" along with six more of their Democratic colleagues. This group will be an important faction in the looming CAT battle. Its mere existence shows that anxiety over CAT transcends party lines. Indeed, whatever else Senate Democrats may agree on, they are far from united on President Obama's climate agenda.

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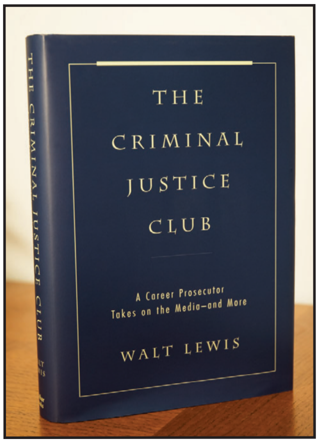

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Obama is seeking to enact a CAT program under which the federal government would impose a hard cap on greenhouse-gas emissions and then auction off 100 percent of pollution allowances. These allowances would be bought and traded by companies based on their respective carbon footprints. The CAT system would begin in fiscal year 2012. Its goal, according to Obama's budget blueprint, would be "to reduce greenhouse gas emissions approximately 14 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, and approximately 83 percent below 2005 levels by 2050."

This would essentially require a nationwide economic transformation, with coal-dependent states and manufacturing areas facing especially steep challenges. In early March, *Politico* reported that the Gang of 16, headed by Senator Stabenow, "is reconvening to brainstorm ways to soften the blow of Obama's proposed climate program on their states' economies." The gang includes Energy and Natural Resources Committee chairman Jeff Bingaman (N.M.), Robert Byrd (W.Va.), and the two senators from North Dakota, Kent Conrad and Byron Dorgan.

The costs of a cap-and-trade system would indeed be high, and they would fall disproportionately on middle- and lower-income Americans.

Small wonder. New Mexico, West Virginia, and North Dakota are all heavily reliant on carbon-heavy coal power for their electricity needs. According to preliminary data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA), coal accounted for roughly 48.5 percent of all U.S. electricity generation in 2008. But its share of the electricity mix varied widely from region to region and from state to state. Coal power provided 97.8 percent of total electricity in West Virginia, 94.5 percent in Indiana, 94.4 percent in Wyoming, 90.9 percent in North Dakota, 85 percent in Ohio, 80.9 percent in Missouri, and 73.5 percent in New Mexico, compared with 14.8 percent in Connecticut, 14 percent in New York, 6.9 percent in Oregon, 2.1 percent in Maine, 1.2 percent in California, 0 percent in Vermont, and 0 percent in Rhode Island.

Those numbers help explain why certain Democrats are so apprehensive about CAT. When it was suggested that Democratic leaders might use the budget-reconciliation process to prohibit a filibuster of climate legislation, 33 senators—25 Republicans and 8 Democrats—sent a letter to Senate Budget Committee chairman Kent Conrad and GOP ranking member Judd Gregg to counsel against the maneuver.

"We oppose using the budget-reconciliation process to expedite passage of climate legislation," they wrote. "Enactment of a cap-and-trade regime is likely to influence nearly every feature of the U.S. economy. Legislation so far-reaching should be fully vetted and given appropriate time for debate, something the budget-reconciliation process does not allow. Using this procedure would circumvent normal Senate practice and would be inconsistent with the administration's stated goals of bipartisanship, cooperation, and openness."

The eight Senate Democrats who signed this letter were Bayh, Byrd, Bob Casey (Pa.), Mary Landrieu (La.), Levin, Lincoln, Nelson, and Pryor. Conrad himself, a member of the Stabenow-led Gang of 16, has said that reconciliation was not intended to accelerate "fundamental reform legislation." As we went to press, it appeared that the Senate budget resolution would not contain reconciliation instructions on CAT.

Yet Republicans fear that Democrats will attempt to insert those instructions in a House-Senate conference committee. "This whole deal is a sham," says a senior GOP Senate aide, who fully expects that Democrats will eventually use reconciliation to fast-track a climate bill and make it filibuster-proof. If so, they would need only 50 votes (with Vice President Biden serving as the tiebreaker) to pass the legislation. "It would be hard but not impossible to get 50," says the Republican aide.

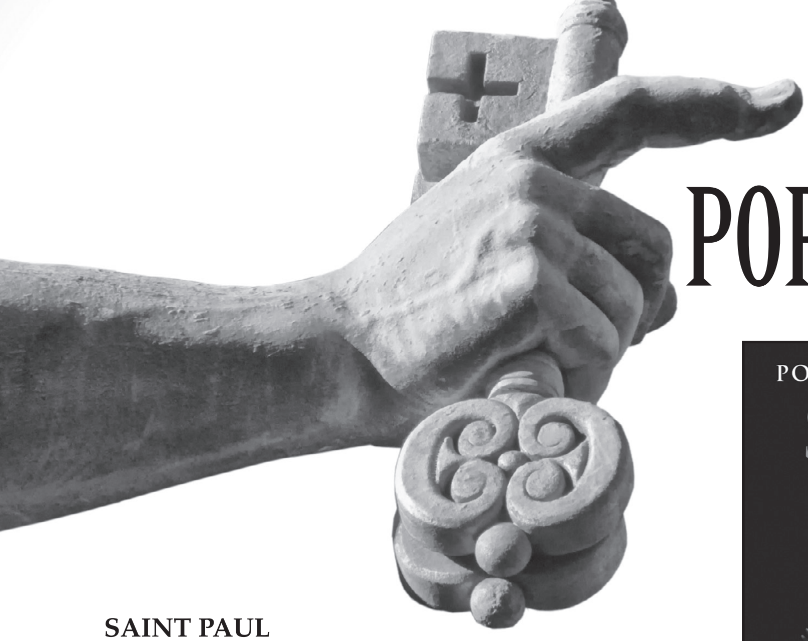
In his primetime news conference on March 24, President Obama declared that climate legislation "has to take into account regional differences" and "has to protect consumers from huge spikes in electricity prices." Easier said than done. The costs of CAT would indeed be high, and they would fall disproportionately on middle- and lower-income Americans.

As the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has noted, "Regardless of how the allowances were distributed, most of the cost of meeting a cap on CO_2 emissions would be borne by consumers, who would face persistently higher prices for products such as electricity and gasoline. Those price increases would be regressive in that poorer households would bear a larger burden relative to their income than wealthier households would."

More specifically, the CBO has calculated that "the price rises resulting from a 15 percent cut in CO_2 emissions would cost the average household in the lowest one-fifth (quintile) of the income distribution about 3.3 percent of its average income," while it would cost the average household in the top income quintile only "1.7 percent of its average income." The corresponding figures for the other three income quintiles (from the second-lowest to the second-highest) would be 2.9 percent, 2.8 percent, and 2.7 percent.

In 2008, the American Council for Capital Formation and the National Association of Manufacturers commissioned a study of the Lieberman-Warner bill, performed by Science Applications International Corporation using the EIA's National Energy Modeling System. It estimated that the costs of compliance with Lieberman-Warner would increase electricity prices for residential consumers by "28 percent to 33 percent in 2020, and 101 percent to 129 percent in 2030." It also concluded that the measure would reduce GDP by "$151 billion to $210 billion in 2020 and $631 billion to $669 billion in 2030 (in 2007 dollars)" and would result in job losses of "1.2 million to 1.8 million in 2020 and 3 million to 4 million by 2030." On the family level, the study found that Lieberman-Warner would reduce average household income by between $739 and $2,927 in 2020 and "between $4,022 and $6,752 in 2030 (in 2007 dollars)."

Obama's budget projects that his CAT



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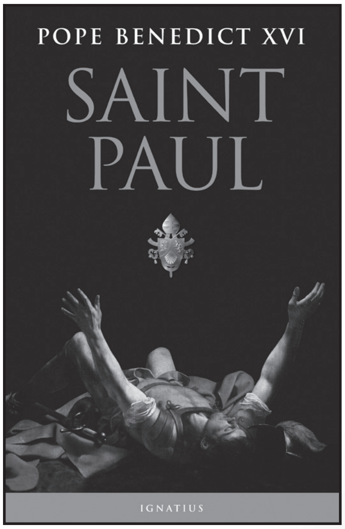
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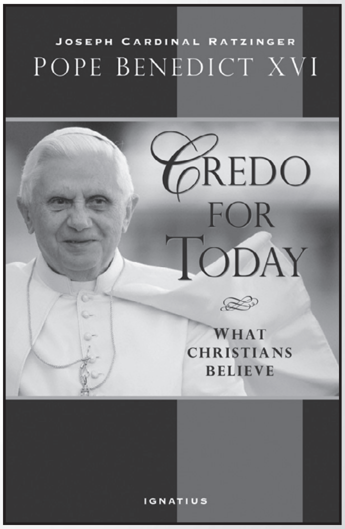
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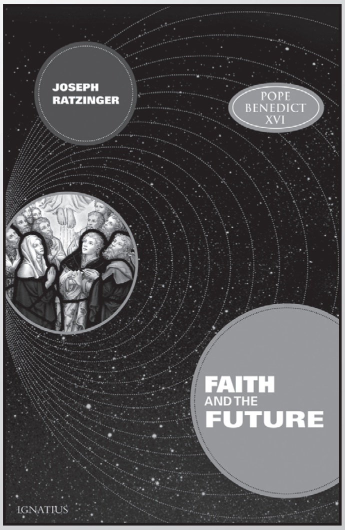
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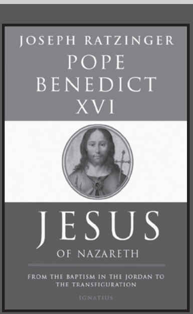
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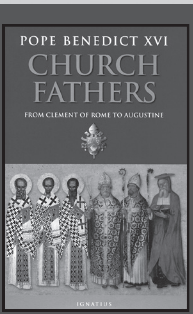
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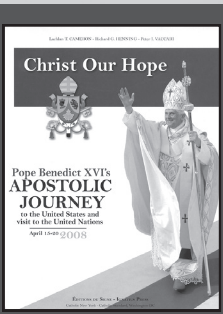
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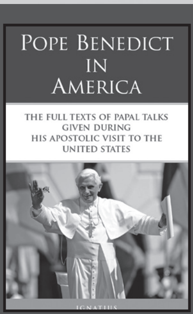
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regime would generate some $80 billion in annual revenues—roughly $646 billion total from 2012 to 2019—most of which would be used to fund the "Making Work Pay" tax credit. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, White House economic adviser Jason Furman has privately said that CAT could yield revenues "two to three times" greater than the official estimate of $646 billion. Meanwhile, Energy Secretary Steven Chu has hinted that the Obama administration may slap tariffs on carbon-intensive imports from countries that don't price CO_2 emissions.

The final bill inevitably will be a Byzantine mix of regulations and loopholes that lobbyists and private companies will seek to exploit. A slew of research has demonstrated that carbon-capping will jack up energy prices and place significant strains on household income. In a January 2008 interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Obama himself admitted that "electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket" under his CAT program. "We know that GDP will fall, and we know that consumption will fall," says Clemson University economist Sergey Mityakov, co-author of a recent paper on the economics of carbon mitigation.

Plenty of prominent Senate Democrats have voiced concerns about either the Obama plan specifically or carbon-capping generally. "I think it's unlikely we will pass a cap-and-trade bill with 100 percent auction," Senator Bingaman said on March 5. Senator Bayh has pointed to the regional implications of carbon-capping: "If you don't do it in the right kind of way," he told MSNBC host Chris Matthews on March 25, "you're taking money from carbon-intensive states like Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, [and] West Virginia, and redistributing it to California [and] New York. That's just a very hard sell to our people at a time when they're hurting. And you also run the risk of taking jobs away and not actually solving global warming."

In a March 23 blog post on *The New Republic*'s website, Brookings Institution scholar William Galston predicted that "cap-and-trade legislation won't pass anytime soon—certainly not this year, and probably not next year either." Whether it does pass in 2009 will depend more on Senate Democrats than on Senate Republicans. **NR**

Green Bubbles Bursting

The delusions of renewables and the realities of nuclear power

BY ALEX ALEXIEV

WITH the selling of President Obama's economic agenda now in full gear, this is a good time to take stock of his energy plans against the background of energy trends worldwide. Alas, even a brief glimpse reveals that Obama's focus on renewable energy and the introduction of a cap-and-trade regime runs counter to both economic rationality and current energy trends to the point of guaranteeing its inevitable failure, which will result in serious economic harm to the United States.

The president is imposing his green agenda on America, even as the renewable-energy bubbles of the Left are bursting, and the world is witnessing the astounding comeback of the kind of energy Obama scrupulously avoids mentioning: nuclear power. To understand this surprising reality, the best place to start is to look at the record of the three countries Obama specifically mentioned in his address to Congress as leading the United States in the renewable-energy revolution: China, Japan, and Germany.

China, he said, "has launched the largest effort in history to make their economy energy efficient." True enough, but that effort has nothing to do with renewable energy, and it's not even clear that it's working. To the Chinese, energy efficiency means more efficient coal-burning equipment, co-generation, coal liquefaction, and other improvements of their primarily coal-based energy industry. Despite marginal improvements in this area, China is now the largest carbon-dioxide emitter in the world and can, at best, slow down but not stop carbon-emissions growth for the foreseeable future. As far as renewable energy proper is concerned, its share of total energy production not only is minuscule, but has actually declined over the past two years, according to Beijing's State Electricity Council. There is, however, one clean-energy sector in which China is making a lot of progress and has even more ambitious plans for the future: nuclear power.

What about Japan? It does produce a lot of solar panels for export and subsidizes rooftop solar installation, but its renewable-energy production target for 2010 is only 3 percent. Instead, Tokyo plans to boost the share of nuclear power to 41 percent from the current 30 percent in less than a decade.

This leaves Germany as a model for our green future. At first glance, it is a renewable-energy success story and, to no one's surprise, it has become the poster child of the green fantasy universe. In just a few years, the country has become the world's powerhouse of green energy, currently generating nearly 15 percent of its electricity from wind power and solar energy, which already exceeds the EU target of a 12.5 percent renewable share for 2010. A heartwarming story, it seems—until one starts asking questions as to how a country that has neither much sun, nor much wind, got there; how much it cost; and where it is going from here.

The reality, of course, is that it doesn't matter how much sun or wind there is as long as the government provides huge subsidies at the expense of the taxpayer and of the economy's future prospects. In Germany, through a scheme innocuously called "feed-in tariff," this has meant guaranteeing solar producers, for instance, a price seven times higher than the wholesale rate *for 20 years*. No wonder every entrepreneur-for-the-dole promptly lined up to feed at the public trough and created an artificial industry overnight. Yet, with Germany's electricity bill going up by 38 percent in just one year (2007 over 2006), this is hardly a sustainable proposition. If that's not enough, several years of operational experience have proven what experts have known or feared for a long time: that renewable energy is not only very expensive but also highly inefficient and unreliable. Solar panels, for example, seldom convert more than 25 percent of sun energy into electricity, while wind

Mr. Alexiev is an adjunct fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C.

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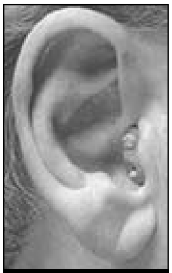

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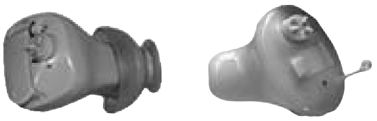

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power's "load factor"—i.e., electricity produced per installed capacity—seldom exceeds 20 percent in Germany. The intermittent nature of both of these sources makes them completely unsuitable for baseload-grid consideration, meaning that they have to be backed up by conventional energy—which, of course, defeats the purpose of green energy as an alternative.

Nor does the German and overall European experience with cap-and-trade provide any reason to be optimistic about the prospects of Obama's plan to raise $646 billion through a similar scheme. Four years after its introduction, the EU carbon-trading scheme has failed to create a functioning emissions-permit market, to generate revenues, or to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions as promised, even as it led to large electricity-rate increases and windfall profits for some of the worst polluters on the Continent.

The bottom line is that for the foreseeable future renewable energy will remain a pie-in-the-sky green fantasy, not feasible economically without huge public subsidies.

Engaging in such economically irrational policies may have been understandable on the part of politically correct Western elites seeking to appease their hysterical environmental lobbies, especially when the stakes were small, energy prices were skyrocketing, and economic prosperity seemed assured. But those days are now gone and probably won't be back for quite some time. Instead, under the perfect storm of collapsing energy prices, the worst economic crisis in decades, a severe credit crunch, and mass unemployment, the green-energy bubble has burst. Around the world, Germany included, green subsidies are being slashed, renewable-energy projects are being canceled or postponed, private capital and credit institutions have abandoned the sector, and many of the once high-flying green companies are on the brink of bankruptcy. Green energy, long touted as our salvation from environmental doom, now appears doomed itself.

This should be a cause for celebration, for out of the ruins of this irrational fantasy, a new, powerful trend toward clean, inexpensive, and reliable power is gathering steam, and it may finally bring some economic rationality to energy policy worldwide. It has taken the form of a remarkable economic comeback–cum–political rehabilitation of the much-maligned nuclear-power industry. Though Americans will hear neither their president nor his devoted claque in the "mainstream" media discuss this, it is already a powerful reality that may yet make the 21st century the century of nuclear power.

What is most remarkable about the nuclear-power revival is that it is a worldwide phenomenon that includes Western countries that until recently were staunch fellow travelers in the anti-nuclear bandwagon. Italy and Sweden, both of which had moratoriums on building nuclear reactors dating back to the 1980s, have now reversed course, and Germany will almost certainly follow shortly. Italy now plans to get 25 percent of its future electricity needs from eight new nuclear plants and has already contracted with a French company for the construction of the first four. Great Britain envisages not only refurbishing eight aging reactors, but also building ten new ones.

France, which never succumbed to the anti-nuclear frenzy and already derives 80 percent of its electricity from 58 reactors, has become a world leader in nuclear technology—eclipsing the U.S.—and is aggressively moving forward with third-generation reactors at home and abroad. Farther east, Ukraine, despite its Chernobyl legacy, plans eleven new reactors by 2030, while Russia, an exporter of nuclear technology, wants to double its electricity output from nuclear power by 2020. Not to be left behind, Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Romania are either planning or already building new nuclear plants. In short, Europe, until recently a citadel of anti-nuclear fervor, is being transformed into a gigantic nuclear-power construction site.

Elsewhere, the nuclear-power steamroller is making even more impressive inroads. India and China, likely economic superpowers of the future alongside the U.S., have both opted for nuclear energy in a decisive way. India, which today produces a meager 4,100 megawatts, or 3 percent of its electricity, from nuclear power, aims to boost that 15-fold, to 63,000 MWs, with 40 new reactors by 2032. It is already constructing five new plants and has just signed a contract with the French company Areva for up to six more third-generation reactors. China, which currently has a nuclear-generating capacity of 9,000 MWs, plans to increase that to 40,000 MWs by 2020 and 63,000 MWs ten years later. Finally, Japan, which alongside France is a world leader in nuclear-electricity technology, is fully committed to nuclear power and intends to double its share of electricity production from the current 30 percent by mid-century.

So where does this leave the U.S., and President Obama's energy agenda? It leaves us in the unenviable position of being the only major economic power led by a president dogmatically wedded to yesterday's make-believe universe of green energy that has already been debunked by reality in the rest of the world. Much as in Europe, renewable energy in America is in a dire predicament. By the end of 2008, American solar- and wind-power stocks had lost some four-fifths of their value—twice the loss rates of the general market—inflicting catastrophic losses on investors who had bought into the green hype. Investment and credit have both dried up and, despite the brave rhetoric of President Obama, there isn't enough government money to make much difference in the absence of private capital. In just one example of the parlous state of renewable affairs, California, where sunlight is nearly as abundant as lack of environmental common sense, produces but 0.2 percent of its electricity from solar power after three decades of heavy subsidies.

Worse may be in store. If Obama's dubious energy agenda is rammed through Congress, as seems likely, not only are Americans going to be saddled with a crushing tax burden, courtesy of the bogus cap-and-trade scheme, but the country's economic competitiveness could suffer lasting if not irreparable damage. Such are the wages of our renewable delusions. **NR**

A Good Plan In Africa

Facing the realities of tribalism

BY TRAVIS KAVULLA

Nairobi, Kenya

DEMOCRACY promotion is and probably always will be America's default foreign policy, embarked upon when no other controlling interests prevail. This is so for two reasons: one philosophical, the fact that the only just government is one accountable to its people; and one practical, the fact that democracy is believed to *work* better than other systems. Since Tocqueville, the conventional wisdom has held that democracy, notwithstanding a few hiccups, yields fruits in the form of political stability and economic prosperity.

In 2002, Kenya shone like a beacon of this precept. Western diplomats had badgered Kenya's government into holding free elections by threatening to withhold aid and suspend IMF and World Bank loans. The ruling party figured it could win: quite the miscalculation. In a flash, three decades of one-party rule were put to an end. The recalcitrant old tyrant, Daniel arap Moi, was motored into Uhuru ("Freedom") Park and—except for the rocks and mud thrown at his limousine—power was handed over peacefully.

Beginning with that poetic moment, Kenya entered a kind of golden age. People were suddenly free to say what they pleased without fear of imprisonment. Newspapers flourished, and reported things that could previously have been passed around only in rumor. The public interest in government was ravenous, and the elite cohort of politics was demystified.

The quality of life of most Kenyans increased in tandem with their liberty. Kenya's shilling stabilized and traded well against international currencies, reducing import prices. GDP increased at a 5 percent annual clip; productivity ranked among Africa's highest. The country's good fortunes inspired an outpouring of sentiment that democracy finally had a foothold in this part of Africa. A "developing country" was—hallelujah—actually developing.

And then, in December 2007, came the country's *second* democratic election. Far from shoring up the gains of the previous five years, the disputed poll and its aftermath reversed them in mere months. Over 1,100 people were killed in a spate of ethnic violence, and more than a quarter million lost their lands, belongings, and livelihoods. Indeed, the number of lives ruined by the election probably exceeds the true margin of the vote. Even beyond the deaths and dispossessions, the violence did an unquantifiable amount of damage to Kenya's reputation. The economy is still in a tailspin today, with inflation nearing 30 percent. A famine looms, both because of poor rains and because the lands of the dispossessed lay fallow all last year. Today, Kenyans are perhaps more anxious than ever about the future of their country.

The international community that had assiduously promoted democratic reform in Kenya was stunned. During the campaign season, the candidates engaged in what seemed a weighty discussion of everything from federalism to economic liberalization to education policy. It was in some ways the spitting image of a Western democracy. Dick Morris, the

Mr. Kavulla is a journalism fellow with the Phillips Foundation and was last year a Gates Scholar in African history at Cambridge.

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American strategist, was even retained by the opposition candidate to do media consulting.

Unfortunately, the seeming health of Kenya's politics was an illusion. Democracy here, as in much of Africa, runs only skin deep. The published results made plain that the vote was little more than a tribal census. Less than five percent of the Kikuyu, the largest tribe, voted for the Orange Democratic Movement, which holds a plurality in the current parliament. An even smaller percentage of the Luo, the second largest, voted for the ironically named Party of National Unity, a mostly Kikuyu group that won the presidency.

The influence of tribal belonging is hard for most modern Westerners to wrap their minds around, now that rivalries between tribes in modern Europe—the English and the French, for example—have been reduced from grand wars for honor to periodic soccer hooliganism. Yet even after the Renaissance and the printing press, tribe was a serious matter in Europe for hundreds of years—only recently becoming something of a joke (behold as once-proud nations give way to the EU).

Africans did not have the luxury of easing into this modern world. It was not until the colonial era began in earnest, a century ago, that tribes were brought together in plantation labor, in city life, and in a state where all were suddenly recognized as Sudanese or Nigerians or Cameroonians. These states have had a varying degree of impact on the lives of their people. But almost everywhere in Africa, there is no national culture that can eclipse tribal culture. Tribe determines the mundane and the essential—whether a people eat mostly vegetables or meat, whether their men are circumcised, how property is inherited.

Tribe has adapted and sometimes been beaten back—though this owes not to the transformative power of democracy, but to the stringent demands of Christianity and Islam that believers put their faith first. Notwithstanding this, tribe remains the central ingredient of most Africans' identity. Today in Kenya—which is one of the most cosmopolitan societies in Africa—intertribal marriages count for no more than one-tenth of the total number. Even in the thriving and diverse city life of Nairobi, tribal distinctions remain. My driver, Sam, is a Kikuyu and has lived in this wonderfully diverse city for 34 years. Yet he prefers to interact with his ethnic fellows if he can help it. When we stop to ask directions, Sam always sidles the car up to a Kikuyu. He is happy to transact small matters (the purchase of a banana or a newspaper) with a member of another tribe. But would Sam drink with them? Buy a car from one? Employ one? Be pleased if his son married one? Never.

Tribal politics is this syndrome blown up into countrywide proportions. In an African democracy, if a party or even a faction of a party associated with a particular tribe is left out of government, a whole people can suffer the consequences—through the bullying of state security forces, a lack of government appropriations, and other means. To those disaffected, there seems a general and pervasive attitude that this government does not include you.

In most places in Africa, there can be little doubt that a national election will play out on the basis of tribe and region. Elections are cherished because they are direct indicators of a person's wishes. But if so many votes are predetermined by ethnicity—if the parties and their politicians are just husks for tribe—it is worth asking whether a winner-take-all election is a predetermined, needlessly inflammatory exercise. African states desperately need to engage in some nation-building, and ethnically charged elections, far from contributing to a national ethic, only further distrust.

The challenge is to bring democracy past tribe, to the level of the individual citizen. Other states, faced with populations that would naturally divide along tribal lines, have chosen not to fight it. Instead, they have modified the template of a nationwide democracy, but are still fit to be recognized as modern nations, accountable to their people. Switzerland is perhaps the lead example of a country, if an idiosyncratic one, that has walked this fine line. Comprising 26 historically independent cantons and encompassing ethnic Germans, French, and Italians, Switzerland is, like most African countries, an unlikely amalgam of peoples and cultures. But rather than forcing them together, as the highly centralized affairs of African governments necessitate, Switzerland's constitution allows them to stay apart. The underlying assumption is that in such a heterogeneous state, rather than reducing democracy to a question of how many are French and how many are German, it is more justly representative to presume a division between them. The result is a confederal government that has, absent a consensus, very little power at the top. Instead, the 26 sovereign cantons control nearly all of their own affairs.

Making a place for tribe in African constitutions is unpopular among these countries' rulers, who once in power do not want to relinquish control of any part of it. It also has a lobby against it in the international community. The array of 54 African states on the map is already too confusing. Were each tribe to have a canton of its very own, the resulting map would make feudal Germany seem whole. Writing tribe into law would also seem to reinforce tribalism. At worst, it could turn a state or a region into a tribal fief, unwelcoming of outsiders.

Yet to ignore tribe and plod naïvely down the road of majority rule is even more dangerous. Tribe will be the subject of politicians' innuendo and will lurk in voters' minds, until one day it explodes. Then, tribe will not be just one troublesome issue the state faces—it will suddenly become *the* issue, violent in its expression and utterly paralyzing of the state.

Western powers can help prevent such crises by tying foreign aid to constitutional revisions that would put African states' distribution of powers back in balance with their people. Remaking the highly centralized, presidential–ministerial state into a more confederal entity that recognizes tribal boundaries, reserves some powers for tribal authorities, and sets aside a quota for tribal representation in a national parliament would force politicians of the same tribe to compete against one another. Tribe's role as a wedge or crutch in politics would be reduced.

This would, indeed, impair "democracy" as it exists and has been promoted in Africa, the fundamental task of which is to choose a powerful national leader directly. But if the purpose of democracy is to make a government that is both representative and stable, then there is no other choice. Africans still identify with their tribal cultures in almost every nominal state. Rather than trying to supplant this sentiment with nationalism, accommodating tribe is one way to ensure that African states are not subject to the artificiality that has so often brought them down in the past. **NR**

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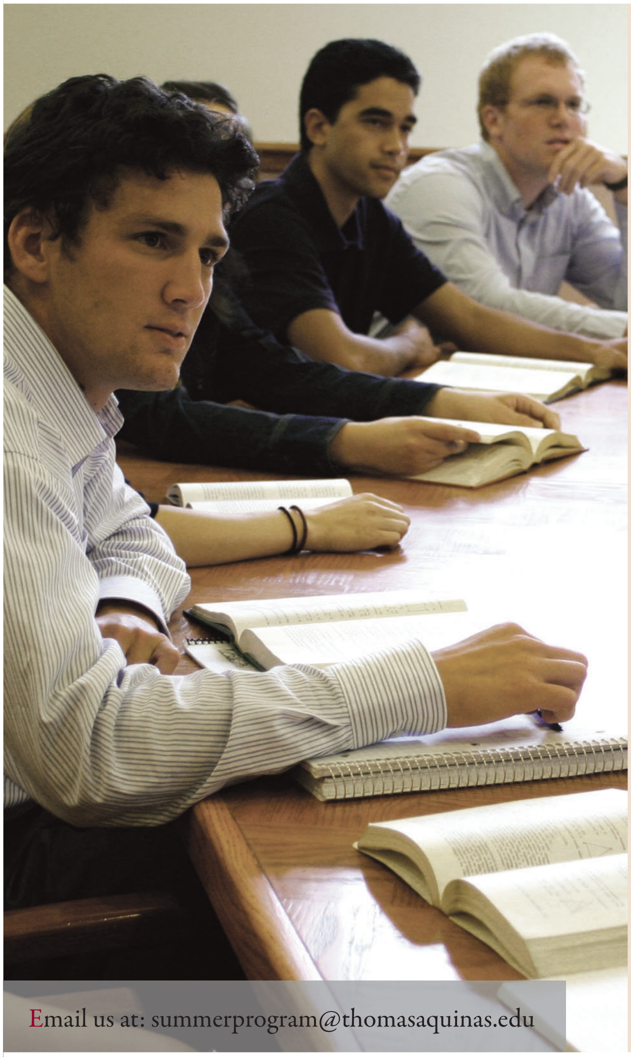

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Tip Jar Nation

We can no longer afford to feel special

BY ROB LONG

HERE'S what just happened.

I'm in a hip coffee shop on Valencia Street in San Francisco. It's early afternoon, and I order a double espresso. I hand over the money and get my change, which is a few bills and a handful of coins. The coins I keep: The parking-meter-enforcement Stasi in San Francisco circle the blocks with unwearied commitment. But the bills, well, I'd ideally like to keep them all, but there's a tip jar on the counter beside the register, with one of those cheerlessly cheerful signs—"Hey! This is a Tip Jar! There's a recession on!"—with a happy face below it. So I slide a $1 bill into the jar, take my espresso, sit down, and wonder if my extravagant tip—it's the only bill in the jar—will mean that when I step up in a few minutes for a refill or a cookie I'll get a smile from the unsmiling girl behind the counter.

What I get is nothing—no smile, no acknowledgment that I've paid for Platinum Level service, no extra care, no nothing. It's as if the tip is part of her overall compensation package, something she negotiates ahead of time with the owners of the coffee shop, the way bankers and auto-company executives and vice presidents of AIG negotiate with the compliant members of the compensation committees of their various boards of directors.

I can even picture it: scruffy, pierced hipsters sitting around a boardroom in some alternative workspace, tapping out calculations on their iPhones, trying to work out what the tattooed girl should take home. Her representative (probably some aging, gray-bearded hippie) explaining that his client has a right to expect a guaranteed base salary plus an agreed-upon bonus based on a share of the tip-jar takings, and a severance agreement that allows for one year of free coffee drinks followed by a year of coffee drinks at cost and a reducible percentage of the tip-jar takings for 18 months following formal separation.

I mean, that's what people are getting these days, right?

In the Tip Jar Nation, everyone gets a bonus. Everyone gets a little amenity, just for showing up. The girl at the counter, the vice president of a troubled insurance giant, the hotel guest (who expects a mint on the pillow)—we've created a culture with so many rewards and so many little extras that we've forgotten what's it's like just to show up, get paid, and go home.

When word of the AIG employee bonuses first splashed onto the front page, it was hard not to understand the string-'em-up impulse of the crowd. It was also hard not to sympathize with the AIG employees who were promised a number and expected it. But no matter which side you were on, you could agree on one thing: The word "bonus" is probably a bad word to use to describe an amount of money that's been negotiated, haggled over, and specified to the penny, especially when it's totally unrelated to the performance or financial solvency of the business. The word for what you pay someone for showing up and doing a job isn't "bonus." It's "salary."

But if you lump it all together in the "salary" bucket of the Excel spreadsheet, you get a pretty huge number. An embarrassingly large number, in some cases—especially cases where the business itself (like banking, insurance, and making stuff in general) is in anemic and destitute shape. So the smart thing to do—to adjust the "optics" of the situation—is to create a lot of different buckets to spread it all around: bonuses and incentives and retention clauses, perks and allowances and one-time payments. But it all adds up to the same thing: what an employer promises to pay an employee, irrespective of the general crappiness of the business. And that ain't a bonus, my friends. That's a paycheck.

But in the Tip Jar Nation, we like to dress things up. We put smiley faces on the tip jar, so it'll seem less demanding. When the children of the Tip Jar Nation play sports, they all get a trophy (the trophy is just a "bonus," in other words: expected, no matter what the score). When the students of the Tip Jar Nation go to college, they expect to get terrific grades—all A's, honor rolls, special mentions in the commencement program. When they check into hotels, they expect Premier Status upgrades, a complimentary something or other, a mint, shampoo, a small bag of Q-tips. When the generous citizens of the Tip Jar Nation go to a charity event, they expect to be thanked with a gift bag on the way out—something small and heavy and filled with expensive lotions.

It's a natural evolution of the self-esteem movement that started in the post-war era but really blanketed the country in the late 1960s, smothering us all with uplifting, supportive messages about our intrinsic self-worth and our specialness. The generation that grew up with *Sesame Street* and grade inflation and the American Express Platinum Card naturally feels entitled to bonuses, tips, little extras. Because what's special about a simple employment contract? What's *incentivizing* about a boring old paycheck?

The citizens of the Tip Jar Nation need to be *incentivized*, you see. They need a little extra motivation to keep them going—the simple pay-packet that enables them to enjoy three-hots-and-a-cot just doesn't get them out of bed anymore.

Or, didn't. As the chill wind of the economic downturn blows its way through the Tip Jar Nation, things might start to get a lot simpler. Salary negotiations could become pretty short: pick a number, give it a haircut, divide by 52, presto. Here's what you get a week. Now get to work.

So, to the girl behind the counter at the coffee place on Valencia, I have some bad news: You got your last tip from this cat. Unless, you know, you smile. That's worth a bonus. **NR**

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Like a picked flower cut from the source, we gradually wilt physically and mentally and become vulnerable to a host of degenerative diseases, that we simply weren't susceptible to in our early adult years.

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The new HGH releasers are winning converts from the synthetic HGH users as well, since GHR is just as effective, is oral instead of self-injectable and is very affordable.

GHR is a natural releaser, has no known side effects, unlike the synthetic version and has no known drug interactions. Progressive doctors admit that this is the direction medicine is seeking to go, to get the body to heal itself instead of employing drugs. GHR is truly a revolutionary paradigm shift in medicine and, like any modern leap frog advance, many others will be left in the dust holding their limited, or useless drugs and remedies.

It is now thought that HGH is so comprehensive in its healing and regenerative powers that it is today, where the computer industry was twenty years ago, that it will displace so many prescription and non-prescription drugs and health remedies that it is staggering to think of.

The president of BIE Health Products stated in a recent interview, I've been waiting for these products since the 70's. We knew they would come, if only we could stay healthy and live long enough to see them! If you want to stay on top of your game, physically and mentally as you age, this product is a boon, especially for the highly skilled professionals who have made large investments in their education, and experience. Also with the failure of Congress to honor our seniors with pharmaceutical coverage policy, it's more important than ever to take pro-active steps to safeguard your health. Continued use of GHR will make a radical difference in your health, HGH is particularly helpful to the elderly who, given a choice, would rather stay independent in their own home, strong, healthy and alert enough to manage their own affairs, exercise and stay involved in their communities. Frank, age 85, walks two miles a day, plays golf, belongs to a dance club for seniors, had a girl friend again and doesn't need Viagara, passed his drivers test and is hardly ever home when we call - GHR delivers.

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AP/DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE/STAFF SGT. ADAM MANCINI

The New
AFGHAN WAR

With patience and the right strategy, we can win

BY RICHARD LOWRY

Kabul

GOV. MOHAMMED HALIM FI-DAI is agitated. He's holding forth in his office in Wardak province a half-hour or so outside of Kabul, before an audience of U.S. military officers and visiting journalists. Fi-dai's English is excellent and the military loves him. A former refugee who worked for years for Western NGOs, he's an ideal partner for the U.S., and we are using his province as a springboard for an experimental program creating a local militia to supplement the national police.

Dressed in a Western jacket over traditional Afghan clothes, Fi-dai has a small white button he can, in theory, push to call one of the attendants who occasionally pop in and out of the room. He repeatedly pushes it but nothing happens. Someone jokes that it must be turning on and off a TV somewhere else in the building. Fi-dai laughs. But he wants to serve his guests lunch and as nothing continues to happen, he gets upset: "This is part of capacity in Afghanistan," he complains, "they can't prepare the food on time. You have to tell them every small thing. They can't make decisions on their own." A little later, he begins to get up from his chair, "I will check on these people."

The visiting U.S. general keeps him from getting up and reassures him, "It will be great." And, eventually, it is—a fine Afghan spread of rice and lamb during which Fi-dai chats proudly about his children's excellent grades back in Kabul, where he continues to live because the schools are better.

The incident isn't particularly important, except by way of illustrating that it's in a country where the smallest thing can be a struggle that the United States is about to launch its most ambitious nation-building project of the post–Cold War era. And it is doing it in the midst of a high-stakes war. Who wins here will determine not just whether al-Qaeda gets safe havens back in Afghanistan, but perhaps the future of Pakistan, which would be further destabilized by a Taliban victory across its border.

The U.N. doesn't technically rank Afghanistan on its human-development index because of insufficient income data. But an Afghan research institute estimates that Afghanistan comes in at 174 out of 178, ahead only of Burkina Faso, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Niger. A U.S. official here compares it to Haiti, except with a sprawling and often confused international presence and abutted by malignant neighbors Pakistan and Iran.

In 1979, the Soviets invaded a country with working infrastructure and governmental institutions and trashed them both, while decapitating the country's traditional local leadership. When the Soviets left, rival mujahideen factions shelled Kabul to the ground. The stately Queen's Palace, a former residence of the royal family where Pres. Hafizullah Amin was assassinated by the Soviets in 1979, still stands ruined on the western fringes of Kabul, testament to the country that existed prior to the serial catastrophes that befell it. The Taliban took over and ground

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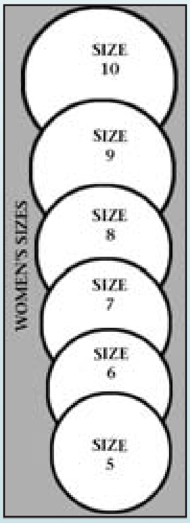

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the country down even farther with its medieval obscurantism.

This is the country that, with a handful of Special Forces troops on the ground and precision strikes from the air, fell into our lap in 2002. Initially, the minimalist Rumsfeld strategy was to eschew a dominant role in nation building or major security operations, to avoid the taint of an occupier. The Europeans, through NATO, would undertake a peacekeeping mission. This approach didn't become manifestly inadequate until about 2006, when the Taliban began to revive. Most of the Europeans didn't have the capability or the will to confront it, while Afghan governmental institutions were failing and the country was well on the road to becoming a narco-state. By this time, of course, the U.S. was embroiled with an insurgency in Iraq and couldn't devote significant new resources to Afghanistan.

'UNDER-RESOURCED" is the word used here over and over to describe the war; in counterinsurgency warfare it is almost always a synonym for failure. While Iraq had 15 American combat brigades before the surge and 20 during it, Afghanistan was in the low single digits and will only reach 7 brigades with the addition of the 21,000 American troops just ordered to Afghanistan by Pres. Barack Obama.

Still and all, coalition officers here, representatives of civilian agencies, and U.N. officials interviewed by our group of visiting journalists, almost to a man, think the mission is doable. The most frequently repeated phrase before they cite an optimistic piece of data or hopeful sign is, "I don't want to be Pollyannaish, but . . ." Their conviction is that the Afghan war hasn't failed, but hasn't yet truly been tried, despite all the sacrifices to this point. Now it will be, with U.S. forces doubling, the U.S. embassy staff doubling, the U.N. budget doubling, and the Afghan army doubling.

The increased resources are pouring into a country worse off and better off than Iraq. Iraq has a more literate population, greater natural resources, and a stronger tradition as a centralized state than Afghanistan, yet Afghanistan is still more peaceful. Even with civilian casualties up 45 percent over the last year, they are just half the current number in post-surge Iraq, and Afghanistan has a larger population.

Kabul is nothing like Baghdad circa 2006, when the Iraqi city descended into chaos, nor even like the Baghdad of today, still plagued by suicide bombs. It can go weeks without a security incident. Kabul is a bustling city of 4 million, if unrelentingly poor. There is traffic in the roads, and even traffic jams. The cars are surprisingly modern. An American officer notes that nearly every time there is intelligence about a suspected suicide car bomb, it is in a white Toyota Corolla—because there are so many white Toyota Corollas on the road.

People ride bikes or walk in the dirt by the side of even the paved roads. Men push wheelbarrows or pull cumbersome pull-carts behind them. Men or women walk singly or in single-sex groups, but never with each other. Some, but not all, of the women are fully covered; many have colorful splashes in their clothing. Like they do throughout the Middle East, men tend to sit crouching on their haunches, like a catcher resting between pitches. In a strange juxtaposition, men in traditional garb will be sitting like this by the side of the road, as they have for centuries—chatting on cell phones. The country went from basically zero cell phones a few years ago to 8 million today. Verizon should volunteer for nation-building duty.

The roads are lined with ramshackle shops in shacks or shipping containers, selling fruit, or car parts, or meat, hanging out in the open air from the ceiling ("the Afghan refrigerator"). Plastic canisters are often stacked in front of the shops, for water or fuel, and children can be seen merrily carrying them around. Under umbrellas, men hawk fruit—bananas hanging in small, browning bunches around them—from small carts. Men stand by the side of the road, dangling long rows of phone cards for sale. In some parts of town, there are even stores with window panes, a cluster of them selling what in this context seem impossibly fancy dresses.

The city sits in a bowl of a valley surrounded by mountains, snow-capped and gorgeous in the distance. Think a post-apocalyptic Denver. How clearly the mountains can be seen is an instant check on the day's air quality, which, in the U.S., would surely get the city's leadership severely punished—maybe jailed—under the Clean Air Act. Think a post-apocalyptic Beijing. People burn anything—including fuel made from dung—to stay warm.

From the air, Kabul is an intricate patchwork of low-slung brown boxes, the city's walled houses stretching in all directions. The trip east to the Khyber Pass by air is a dazzling kaleidoscope of shifting landscapes, from snow-capped peaks to flat high-desert expanses to lush greenery around the Kabul River and back again, and seemingly every landscape in between. Never has godforsaken been so unbelievably beautiful. Gen. Mark Milley, deputy commander in the east, has a different take looking down on the remote mountains: "This is perfect guerrilla country."

In contrast to Iraq, where the insurgency was largely, if not exclusively, an urban phenomenon, here it is mostly rural. In the east, American officers don't even like to refer to the highly "syndicated" insurgency as the Taliban, believing that the name glorifies it with more coherence than it deserves. There are a few key factions, such as the Hizb-i-Islami-Gulbuddin of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the network of Sirajuddin Haqqani that is one of the main killers of U.S. troops, in cooperation with criminal groups.

In the south, where the Pashtuns dominate (they are the largest ethnic group in the country and make up 42 percent of the population), the insurgency is truly a Taliban production. It plays out against the backdrop of a complex human environment where new local power players—often drug lords—have risen up from the ashes of the devastated traditional social structure. "In the east it's three-dimensional chess, in the south it's ten-dimensional chess, and I'm not sure I understand all the boards," says an American general who has served in both areas.

To meet this challenge, the first priority has to be providing what coalition officers refer to as "persistent security." It's the only way to give the population the sense of safety it needs to turn decisively against an insurgency that thrives on intimidation. There simply haven't been enough troops on the ground to do it. Instead, the coalition has played "whack-a-mole," hitting targets and then leaving, allowing the insurgents to return. That's changing. In Wardak province, for instance, U.S. forces have increased by a factor of 10, from 100 to 1,000. That has to make a difference. Says General Milley, "It's not rocket science, it's war—mass matters."

Population centers are the focus of the fight. "Whoever said 'where paved roads end, the Taliban begins'—it's actually the opposite," says an American general. In the south, where the war is generally considered a stalemate, the population is clustered around a few cities, the ring road that circles around the country (built with American aid dollars in the 1960s), and river valleys. The coalition is in possession of most of these key areas, but must better secure the connections between them.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The New Anti-Semitism

Who are its advocates? What are its goals?

The Holocaust, in which over six million Jews were brutally murdered by the Nazis and their enthusiastic collaborators, happened over 60 years ago. So terrific were the events that – even today, about two generations later – nobody would wish to identify himself with them. Yet, a new anti-Semitism is now rearing its head. It is important to be aware of it.

What are the facts?

Who are the new anti-Semites? The new anti-Semites do not publicly proclaim their desire to bring about a second Holocaust or to subject the Jews to mass murder or annihilation. The hatred is aimed against the state of Israel, which, according to the new anti-Semites, represents all that is evil in the world and which is the main violator of human rights and guilty of virtually every other abuse that can be conceived. This poison is now so widespread that a poll taken in Europe not too long ago found Israel to be the greatest menace to the peace of the world – far ahead of such murderous regimes as those of Iran or of North Korea.

> "...the viciousness, volume and consistency of this criticism against Israel is such that it cannot be considered as anything but anti-Semitism..."

The leaders and instigators of this new anti-Semitism are concentrated on the political left, its most active and vocal spokesmen being found in our prestige universities. Such is the anti-Zionist (anti-Semitic) focus of the left that, almost incomprehensibly, it includes a fair number of Jewish professors and other "intellectuals," not just here in the United States, but even in Israel itself.

Those on the extreme left call for the abolition of the State of Israel outright, although they do not tell us what they propose to do with the five million Israeli Jews. They would presumably be left to the tender mercies of the Arabs, who would, of course, have no greater joy than to emulate or perhaps even to "improve" on the Nazi model and to give "final solution(!) to the Jewish problem" once and for all. That isn't going to happen, of course, not because anybody in the world would lift a finger to prevent it, but because, fortunately, Israel is a very strong and most capable nation.

A death wish for Israel. In deference to "world opinion" and also to the wishes of the United States, Israel has allowed itself to be pressured into innumerable concessions to those who are sworn to destroy it. But it seems clear that, when the chips are really down, a most decisive response on the part of Israel can be expected. With the possible exception of Carthage during the Punic Wars, almost 2500 years ago, no country in the world, no country in recorded history, has ever been threatened with extinction. Israel is the one exception. Fueled by the extreme left, the "legitimacy" of Israel is a constant topic of discussion. The abolition of the "Zionist entity" gets serious attention, even in the hallowed halls of the United Nations. Iran feverishly pursues the Holy Grail of atomic weapons. Its president has publicly declared – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel is a "tumor" that must be excised and that it must be wiped off the map of the world. Medium-range missiles (so far, fortunately without atomic warheads) are being paraded through the streets of Teheran, with signs attached to them, shamelessly giving their destination as Jerusalem. A few eyebrows are being raised around the world, but otherwise nothing is being done about it.

Because the memory of the Nazi Holocaust still lingers after all these years, the new anti-Semitism is disguised as the socially more acceptable "anti-Zionism." It is pursued and propagated by the radical left. Every leftist demonstration – be it about the war in Iraq, against globalization, for or against whatever else – does inevitably include appeals against "Israeli subjugation of the Palestinians," the "occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel," or simply asks for the elimination of Israel. Sadly, quite a few Jews, having been saturated with leftism from their early years, participate in such demonstrations.

While the propagation of the new anti-Semitism by prestige universities started in Europe (mostly in England), it has found fertile ground in the universities of the United States. The active participation in the new anti-Semitism by the American clergy (beginning with the Presbyterians) is a scandalous reality.

Surely, not everybody who criticizes Israel is an anti-Semite. The actions of Israel, just as the actions of any other countries, are subject to examination and criticism. But the viciousness, volume and consistency of this criticism against Israel is such that it cannot be considered as anything but anti-Semitism – the new anti-Semitism, disguised as anti-Israelism or anti-Zionism. The foolish professors and the hypocritical preachers are besotted by their leftism and by their hatred against Israel and America. Overt vilification of America has to remain muted – it's somewhat dangerous to be too outspoken about it – but Israel, perceived as the satrap and the handmaiden of the United States in the Middle East, is an easy target. Nobody should be fooled. Anti-Semitism is anti-Semitism in whichever way it may be disguised.

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Insurgents are able to stage out of Baluchistan in Pakistan, unmolested by Pakistani forces. (That's where Mullah Omar maintains his shura, or leadership council, in the city of Quetta.) Then, they can move through the unoccupied spaces of southern Afghanistan. A trip by helicopter from Kandahar south to the border town of Spin Boldak is a journey over an empty vastness—dry, brown, mountainous—that is ideal for infiltration. The new forces will work to squeeze off these routes.

They will be going to areas where they haven't been before, "digging up a hornet's nest" in the words of one general. This is why coalition officials are bracing themselves for even more casualties this summer, but also believe security has to improve, almost inevitably. And that is the foundation for everything else.

NO one in the military thinks military force, or "kinetic activity" in the bloodless lingo, will be adequate. Officers have thoroughly absorbed the lesson of counterinsurgency. A State Department official says that, of all the coalition forces on the ground here, the Americans have the military that most appreciates the need for the civilian effort and the civilians that most appreciate the need for the military effort. After security must come governance—government services and the rule of law—and economic development to keep Afghans from returning to the insurgency.

The Taliban isn't popular. It has no appealing, positive program and no charismatic, unifying figure like Mao Tse-tung or Ho Chi Minh. There is much talk back home of splitting off the Taliban's "reconcilable" elements. There is more doubt here that such reconcilable elements exist within the Taliban proper. But there are certainly local fighters who are picking up a rocket-propelled grenade or planting an IED just for pay. And some Pashtuns are fighting for the Taliban because they feel excluded from the central government, which they perceive as controlled by the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance that swept into Kabul in late 2001. "If there's the real possibility of inclusion," says Christopher Alexander, a top U.N. official, "you'll really split these groups."

The country's foremost political player is Pres. Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun. His reputation has plummeted among the American military, which can't abide what they consider his grandstanding over civilian casualties caused by coalition raids. Karzai is increasingly unpopular among his countrymen too, but he is likely to win re-election this summer since there isn't a viable alternative.

Even if Karzai were flawless, he'd have one of the most difficult jobs in the world—and he's not. Many observers think he'd prefer to be king, the symbolic ruler of the country rather than its chief administrator. He has a blind spot for former mujahideen commanders, who form a corrupt oligarchy, and for his family. His half-brother Ahmed Wali is the chairman of the provincial council of Kandahar and is widely believed to be involved in the drug trade.

Corruption and the drug trade are enormous, intertwined problems. Corruption risks alienating people from the government. An example: If someone can't get justice through the normal channels because he can't afford the bribes, he will turn to the sharia courts of the Taliban.

The drug trade, meanwhile, is a $4 billion business and funnels an estimated $100 million to $500 million to the Taliban. By way of comparison, the operating budget of the ministry of defense is just $58 million. Programs to distribute wheat seeds for free have met with some success, partly because the price of wheat has been up recently. The poppy crop was down 14 percent last year, and is projected to be down another 20 percent this year. But it's a challenge. The drug lords will pay in advance for poppy and come to a farm to collect it, relieving the farmer of the burden of traveling dangerous roads to try to take his crops to market.

On governance more broadly, there is a debate whether to empower the central government or localities, but it's not an either/or question. Both must be enhanced and connected to one another. The country can't be handed off to local warlords, as some suggest. They will only misgovern it and feed the insurgency. Nor is creating somewhat competent government in Afghanistan necessarily a pipe dream, since the country had a functioning state prior to the Soviet-sponsored coups in the 1970s that started its slide toward oblivion.

The coalition is working both the center and the periphery. The ministry of interior had been corrupt, factionalized, and a safe haven for drug lords. Now, Mohammad Hanif Atmar, a British-educated reformer whom the coalition loves, has taken over the ministry. Westerners think the ministers around Karzai may be the strongest he has ever had. Meanwhile, at the local level they work closely with provincial governors like Fi-dai of Wardak. The province is the first site of a pilot program recruiting locals to supplement the (disappointing) national police at the village level, roughly on the model of the "Sons of Iraq" security volunteers in Iraq.

The difficulties inherent in all this have led to talk inside the Beltway that we can "lower expectations," and just focus on a minimalist counterterrorism mission. That would really be a return to a version of the strategy that brought us to this point. The Afghans hate the phrase, sensing it's a prelude to their abandonment. "It can only be justified," thunders Afghan defense minister Abdul Rahim Wardak, a stout former mujahideen leader, "if your will is weakened and you want to come up with excuses." Coalition officers tend to agree. An Australian says, "If you get half in, it will be too hard." Afghanistan needs a version of General Petraeus's "Mesopotamian stampede," a push on all fronts that eventually creates a tipping point in security and Afghan capabilities.

THERE have been two unquestionable successes in nation-building and development. First, there's the 80,000-strong Afghan National Army, an ethnically balanced force well-regarded both by the public and by its coalition enablers. The Soviets built the Kabul Military Training Center in the 1970s, and we bombed the hell out of it in the war. Now, there are 4,800 new recruits at the rebuilt, sprawling facility. "There is a strategic purpose above and beyond security," British brigadier Neil Baverstock says of the army whose training he helps oversee. "It binds the people to the center in a way other institutions in Afghanistan don't. It is a force for national unity, and is seen by the Afghans as such."

Second, there is the National Solidarity Program. Under the program, a village elects a Community Development Council that settles on a project, like a school or a water pump. It will receive funding up to $60,000 for the project but it has to put up 10 percent of its cost, through cash or in-kind contributions. The process vests the community in the project and it has proven one of the most successful ways to extend the reach of the government to the local level. "Where we've invested, the institutional result has come very quickly," says Alexander. "Development experts are consistently amazed at how this country responds to good development work."

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If the Afghan war is winnable, it's also losable. A war of counterinsurgency is always a test of wills. If the insurgency has the support of about 10 percent of the population, that's not nearly enough for it to prevail, but it can keep fighting for a long time. An American colonel estimates it will take five years to get Afghanistan to where Iraq is now, with coalition forces beginning to draw down and Iraq forces increasingly in the lead. In his strategic review, Obama rejected the counsel of his advisers who wanted to minimize his commitment; he embraced a "comprehensive" counterinsurgency approach, even if he sold it in minimalist counterterrorism terms. Will Obama ultimately have the requisite strategic patience? No one can know.

The border areas of Pakistan are a devilish problem. "If the sanctuaries don't go away, the insurgency doesn't go away," a top U.S. officer says. President Karzai likes to say that Pakistan is more of a state than Afghanistan, but that Afghanistan is more of a country. Pakistan doesn't just have lawless tribal areas, it fails to govern areas, such as Baluchistan, that are parts of its country proper. It refuses to acknowledge that Mullah Omar is operating from Quetta, and the ISI (the Pakistani intelligence service) continues to support the insurgency. Obama wants to try to coax the Pakistanis along, with more development aid—$1.5 billion a year for the next five years—while also confronting them more forthrightly over their depredations. What this will achieve, no one can say.

Finally, there's the sheer backwardness of Afghanistan. At times, it comically defeats the best American intentions. An American involved in developing an Afghan air force shows off the fancy new facilities we have bought for the Afghans. He says we have to tell them not to cut up their food on the floor, that's why we gave them stainless-steel tables. It's a country with rampant unemployment, yet half a million foreign workers had to be imported last year because there is so little skilled labor. Seventy percent of Afghan recruits into the army are illiterate; anyone who can read is put on a fast track to become an NCO. In one police sub-station in Kandahar, out of 45 police, only two or three can read.

You don't have to look far in this country for historical portents. At the Kabul training facility, the rusted-out remains of Soviet armored vehicles—the T-72 tanks sunk into the ground, their barrels titled downward—are lined up for training purposes. Just over the hills is the mountain pass through which a British contingent retreated in 1842, on the way to a slaughter from which only one soldier, a surgeon, escaped. But the Americans aren't a brutal occupying army or a hated colonial power. It's hard to imagine a military force more committed to bettering the lives of a foreign people.

"The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society," Daniel Patrick Moynihan once wrote. "The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself." In Afghanistan, the military is a conservative institution in the service of that liberal truth. There are precedents. In congressional testimony, the Afghan expert Marin Strmecki noted that "in the mid-1950s, South Korea was worse off by most social, economic, and political indicators than Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban." Within three decades, it was an "Asian tiger."

We don't need that sort of transformation, but merely an Afghanistan that is strong enough to ward off a terrorist insurgency. As one civilian official says, the standard is pretty low. In Iraq, the people will be disappointed if we don't restore the country to middle-class stability; in Afghanistan, the people just want us to stop the pain. And, now, we will try. **NR**

The Least-Bad OPTION

Under current conditions, government seizure of shaky firms may be a necessary evil

BY STEPHEN SPRUELL & KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

PETER WALLISON speaks with the confidence of a man who has a track record of making accurate predictions. Ten years ago, when Fannie Mae decided to loosen its underwriting standards and jump into the subprime-mortgage market, Wallison accurately observed that Fannie's excessive risk-taking was a function of its implicit government backing. "If they fail," he told the *New York Times*, "the government will have to step up and bail them out the way it stepped up and bailed out the thrift industry."

Having watched the disaster he predicted unfold, Wallison is understandably upset that policymakers appear to have learned nothing from their mistakes. Case in point: Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner has proposed a new regulatory framework to govern "systemically significant" firms, which would include the power to seize such firms if necessary. This would be "a catastrophe for the financial system in the U.S.," Wallison says. "The worst part about it . . . is this process of designating systemically significant companies. It is going to create Fannies and Freddies in every industry where these companies are designated. It means that these companies will not be allowed to fail."

Here's the problem: Even without Geithner's proposal, the government has already created the perception—and the reality—that systemically significant companies will not be allowed to fail. A year's worth of bailouts have allowed moral hazard to spread throughout the financial system. Restoring market discipline, if possible, could be a decades-long process. If you accept the depressing but increasingly inescapable conclusion that we have already created a nation of Fannies and Freddies, then the question becomes: How do we best protect taxpayers from the prospect of endless bailouts? Conservatives answered this question with regard to the original Fannie and Freddie by calling for a powerful regulator with the authority to seize the companies if necessary.

That doesn't mean conservatives should back Geithner's proposal in every particular, but it does mean that we need to rethink our approach to financial regulation. First, it's important to look at how we got here. The present crisis in the financial system is the result of compounded failures across a number of institutions. We have seen private financial firms with gold-plated names such as Lehman Brothers, Goldman Sachs, and Citigroup reduced to insolvency or government dependency. The credit-ratings agencies blew the major calls in evaluating the risk of the securities they graded, and the markets and market institutions failed to ensure that investors making multibillion-dollar bets on credit defaults were in a position to pay off if things went south. Away from Wall Street, Main Street mortgage lenders wrote ridiculous loans to borrowers who leveraged their families up like hedge funds.

The political failures were even worse. The regulators were owned by the industries they were supposed to be regulating and took balance-sheet fictions for fact. They couldn't even identify Bernie Madoff as a thief when they were informed, in no uncertain terms, that he was one. The fundamental problem was—and is—that the political class has been hypnotized by the dream that houses are magical investments with prices that can only go up, and even now they continue to act as if thinking makes it so. Politics warped the real-estate market and the market for securities derived from real estate.

Former senator Phil Gramm argues that regulatory reform should start where the problem started: the housing industry. Democrats have vilified Gramm for championing financial deregulation in the late 1990s, even though the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, which allowed financial-services companies to diversify their lines of business, passed the Senate with 90 votes and was signed into law by Bill Clinton. Gramm says deregulation wouldn't have been a problem if it hadn't been for government policies that encouraged subprime lending: "There is no question that the catalyst for this crisis was the politicization of mortgage lending," he says, citing examples like the Community Reinvestment Act—which pressures banks to make mortgages available to people without much in the way of income, assets, or credit—and the explosion of Fannie and Freddie's subprime portfolio.

"You take subprime out of this equation, and we would have had a financial adjustment, but I don't think we would have had the financial crisis or the recession," Gramm says. He argues that reform should begin in the housing industry with minimum down payments, higher credit standards for home loans, and limitations on borrowers' ability to refinance. "Once borrowers have built up equity in the home, we shouldn't let them use refinancings or second loans to lower their equity to less than 10 percent of the house," he says.

Unfortunately, there is almost no momentum on Capitol Hill behind reform proposals aimed at tightening mortgage-lending standards. If anything, there is a bipartisan consensus behind policies designed to reinflate the housing bubble. In any case, housing reforms would not adequately address the larger problem, which is the endemic moral hazard in our financial system created by the bailouts. The government is now a major partner in most of our main financial institutions, so "let the markets sort it out" isn't going to cut it, and conservatives are obliged to deal with that reality.

ONE aspect of the new reality is the coming creation of new regulations and new regulators. Going back to a pre-meltdown status quo isn't politically possible, nor is it desirable. And with the political winds blowing hard in the faces of free-market capitalists, it may be that the best conservatives can achieve at this moment is to identify the least-bad option and work for marginal improvements in the regulatory environment. This does not, however, have to be a net loss, or a permanent loss, for those who cherish economic freedom as an essential component of our overall political liberty. Pre-meltdown Wall Street was a highly regulated place, and post-meltdown Wall Street will be highly regulated, too. But conservatives can, if we act intelligently, come out of this with a body of sensible regulations that do not unduly inhibit trade and innovation but do address the problems of systemic risk in the financial system, fraud, the abuse of accounting practices, and the corruption of our public and private financial institutions.

For starters, conservatives should give cautious consideration to the idea of a new regulator with the authority to seize insolvent non-bank financial firms and force them into receivership. Under normal circumstances, this idea would be anathema to conservatives; we would argue that such firms should work things out with their creditors in bankruptcy court. Unfortunately, the collapse of Lehman Brothers altered the political calculus of bankruptcy. On September 15, Lehman submitted the largest bankruptcy filing in American history. The Dow fell 500 points. The federal government had to stop a run on money-market funds, which are generally ranked among the safest investments. The market for commercial paper—loans that most corporations rely on for short-term financing—froze solid. The Fed had to create an unprecedented commercial-lending facility to prevent a broader economic collapse.

In a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed arguing against the Geithner plan, University of Pennsylvania professors Francis Diebold and David Skeel wrote that the Lehman bankruptcy was so chaotic primarily because nobody thought the government would actually let Lehman fail. If the government had not bailed out Bear Stearns a few months earlier, Diebold and Skeel wrote, then "Lehman and its buyers would not have played chicken with the Fed and Treasury as they did, holding out for a government guarantee of the sales of Lehman's assets."

But if moral hazard was the problem back in September, it is even more of a problem now. Key U.S. policymakers have made it abundantly clear that they think letting Lehman go bankrupt was a mistake, and market players will factor that information into their future decisions. This means that letting other large financial firms collapse could have even greater systemic consequences, since everyone will have been counting on a bailout. Bankruptcy does not give policymakers a way to deal with these consequences, while further bailouts would just worsen the moral hazard that led us to this point. Resolution authority—the power to seize these firms and oversee their orderly liquidation—might be the least-bad option.

Geithner's plan would give this new resolution authority to the Treasury secretary, but the biggest (and most underreported) problem with his plan is that it would also make permanent the Treasury secretary's authority to make loan guarantees, asset purchases, and stock purchases to prevent firms from collapsing. This would transform the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) from a temporary crisis-management tool into a permanent feature of the policy landscape. It would turn the $700 billion bailout into a blank check.

Stanford economist John Taylor, author of *Getting Off Track: How Government Actions and Interventions Caused, Prolonged, and Worsened the Financial Crisis*, argues that this would defeat the purpose of the resolution authority. "Something is needed to prevent the bailout mentality that we've gotten into," he says.

"You need some kind of a Plan B that the government can refer firms to when it's tempted to bail them out." Federal receivership could be that Plan B, Taylor says, but only if Congress takes the bailout option off the table.

Once future bailouts are ruled out, the new regulator could be modeled after the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation—one of the few institutions that have come out of this mess with their reputations more or less intact. The FDIC works pretty well when we let it do its real job, which is narrowly defined: insuring bank deposits, supervising financial institutions, and managing receiverships. The financial markets' new sheriff should focus on the stability of the system, not on saving friends and fortunes at politically connected firms and funds. It should be empowered to shut down and sort out risk-inflating, over-leveraged financial operators—not to give them bailout money.

The new regulator ought to have a clear, narrowly defined FDIC-style mandate and the necessary powers to carry it out: namely, the power to force insolvent financial firms into receivership, and to perform haircuts on those firms' investors and bondholders, rather than on taxpayers. Like the FDIC, it should be funded by a levy on the firms it regulates.

The new regulator ought to have a clear, narrowly defined FDIC-style mandate and the necessary powers to carry it out: namely, the power to force insolvent financial firms into receivership, and to perform haircuts on those firms' investors and bondholders, rather than on taxpayers.

Yves Smith, a corporate financial adviser, believes that this is a more manageable proposition than many realize. For all the bewildering complexity of the instruments traded on Wall Street, she thinks that only a relatively small number of firms will require robust oversight for systemic-risk purposes.

"Everything in life is 80/20," Smith says, referring to the familiar observation that in many complex systems, 80 percent of the effects come from 20 percent of the causes. "There are very few major credit-market intermediaries, compared to how many banks there are. As for hedge funds, for instance, while they are numerous, many don't run with leverage, contrary to the popular perception. You'd only look at the levered ones."

"The Bank of England in 2007 did a financial-stability report and they identified 16 large, complex financial institutions," Smith says, "the ones they thought could create systemic risk. They were the ones you expect: Goldman, Lehman, Morgan, Barclays, Société Générale, Paribas." It is essential to identify the right institutions—and it's not clear that regulators are competent to do so. As Smith points out, the Bank of England watch-list didn't include Bear Stearns, the firm that ended up being the canary in this collapsing financial coal mine. Bear was overlooked because the B of E, like most of the other players, was paying insufficient attention to credit-default swaps, and Bear was writing a lot of them.

Smith argues that, in a perfect world, the central bank would be the place to locate a systemic-risk regulator. But given the culture of the actual Fed, as opposed to an ideal Fed, she agrees that a regulator with qualities similar to those of the FDIC is a relatively attractive option. "We need to form some kind of group, whether it sits at the FDIC or it's a separate group that coordinates strongly with the FDIC, that understands these complicated products and has the authority to go in and kick the tires."

TAYLOR, the Stanford economist, points to another danger of vesting the Fed with the authority to regulate systemic risk. "Probably the biggest danger is that the Fed would lose its independence," Taylor says. The Fed needs to remain relatively free from political pressure in order to make the often-unpopular decision to raise interest rates and curb inflation. "If we lose the ability to keep inflation in line," Taylor says, "we've lost a great deal of the reason to have a central bank."

But the FDIC has problems of its own, namely that its funds and its mission are being appropriated for the wider bailout. The *Financial Times*'s Willem Buiter argues that this isn't only bad policy, it's possibly criminal: "I believe that the raids by the U.S. Treasury on the FDIC and on the Fed are illegitimate and, in the case of the FDIC, quite possibly illegal." The FDIC has $22 billion set aside in its insurance fund to cover possible bank failures in 2009, and it can tap a $30 billion line of credit from the Treasury in an emergency. There are $7 trillion worth of deposits in U.S. banks, and the FDIC ensures most of that.

So what to do instead? Gramm says the power should be split between the Fed, the FDIC, and the Treasury secretary: "If you're going to cede that kind of power to any agency, I would give it to the Federal Reserve. Require a vote of the board, and then require the concurrence of the FDIC and Treasury." It may not be ideal, he says, but "the reality is that the Fed is already actively involved in these joint decisions, whether that's a good idea or a bad idea."

Replacing the bailout mentality with a sort of streamlined bankruptcy procedure would probably reduce the burden on the taxpayer, but it would not eliminate it. "You would need funds for temporary liquidity," a former Treasury official says. "A line of credit at the Treasury, a debtor-in-possession loan—some kind of substitute financing." Given that taxpayers would still be exposed to losses, the new regulator would need the authority to curtail risk-taking at systemically significant firms.

There are several ways policymakers could go about doing this. Rep. John Campbell, a California Republican who sits on the House Financial Services Committee, described one option the committee has discussed, which could be called the antitrust approach. "If you become so big that you become a risk to the entire financial system," he says, "then you need to be broken up into parts so that you don't threaten the system." (Campbell did not endorse this idea; he said it is one he is considering.)

Rep. Scott Garrett, a New Jersey Republican who also sits on the committee, thinks this would be a bad idea: "I certainly would have a natural resistance to artificial limitations on the size of firms. You might be putting a limitation on a firm whose size is beneficial in other areas of the economy." Nor would such a limitation reduce systemic risk: "The savings-and-loans created a huge problem," he says, "but that wasn't because one or two firms were too large."

Campbell described another idea, which we think is a better approach: Once a firm is deemed "systemically significant," it would encounter a new tier of regulation, including things like stricter capital requirements. There are plenty of problems with this approach: How do we determine which firms are "systemically significant" and which aren't? How do we account for financial products that haven't been invented yet? These questions illustrate the shortcomings of regulation as an alternative to market discipline, but unfortunately, our government's actions in response to this crisis have impaired the market's workings to the point that we are willing to consider tighter regulation as an alternative.

Then there are some relatively noncontroversial changes, such as requiring a real insurable interest for credit-default swaps—which are, in essence, insurance. Under the current rules, you can buy insurance for a bond in which you have no financial interest, like buying a life-insurance policy on somebody you don't know. Smith, the financial adviser, offers a few other straightforward suggestions: Get as many instruments onto exchanges as possible, in order to ensure that traders are adequately capitalized and that positions can be unwound without cash infusions from the government. She also argues that accounting reforms—coupled with a few vigorous criminal-fraud prosecutions—would help restore investors' confidence in corporate bookkeeping.

Above all, however, we should keep in mind that regulation is always a poor alternative to the workings of the free market. Peter Wallison makes the point that all of our current regulations failed to prevent the present crisis and that there is no reason to think new regulations will prevent the next one. "The fallacy underlying all of this is that regulation prevents risk-taking and loss," he says. "It doesn't." The most important goal, he says, is to destroy the impression that any firm is too big to fail.

We're sympathetic to that goal, and we also realize that anyone who disagrees with Peter Wallison does so at his own peril. Nevertheless, it is going to be a long time before we get Uncle Sam out of the banking and insurance businesses, and it will probably be longer still before we get the kind of broader economic liberalization we need to restore functioning to the market. Conservatives do not have to set aside our values, but we do have to get our hands dirty dealing with the actual problems in front of us, with the institutions we have, under the limitations of the political realities of the day. **NR**

BEYOND Terrorism

The Islamist threat is worse than you think

BY ANDREW C. McCARTHY

'ALLAH is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Koran is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope." This is the battle cry of Hizb al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin, Egypt's notorious Muslim Brotherhood, the intellectual font of Sunni Islamic radicalism for nearly a century. And that should give us pause.

Unlike al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and other terror networks, the Brotherhood purports to forswear violence—convincingly so, according to foreign-policy solons who urge U.S. diplomatic engagement with the group. The Brotherhood, they say, is mainstream and moderate. It is the Brotherhood, not the repressive Mubarak regime, that grips the mantle of democracy, pining for free elections. The political process, not terrorism, is the Brotherhood's chosen path for achieving its ends. So the organization's American fan club insists, blithely gliding by what those decidedly immoderate ends entail. Thus, the enormity of the motto: The Brotherhood may have abandoned violence (at least its direct execution by Brotherhood operatives), but it has never forsworn jihad. For the Brothers, jihad is still "our way," and "dying in the way of Allah"—the martyrdom glorified by Islam's prophet—remains "our highest hope."

To speak of jihad without brutality seems contradictory. But it is not—though the explanation for this differs markedly from the benign rationale offered by Muslim revisionists. They claim the Islamic obligation of jihad (which literally means "struggle") is not about violence or "holy war." In their fable, the "greater" jihad has always been the Muslim's struggle to live a virtuous life, and the term's bellicose connotation is no more meaningful than commonplace calls to metaphorical "war"—against drugs, poverty, tobacco, and the like. They acknowledge a "lesser jihad," a violent vestige of Islam's history, but claim it is relevant in modern times only when Muslims are under siege.

This smiley-face jihad remains unconvincing. Bernard Lewis, the West's preeminent scholar of Islam, points out that "the overwhelming majority of early authorities, . . . citing relevant passages in the Qur'an and in the tradition, discuss *jihad* in military terms." Moreover, the encyclopaedic *Dictionary of Islam*, first published by the British missionary Thomas Patrick Hughes in 1886, defines jihad as "a religious war with those who are unbelievers in the mission of Muhammad." So entrenched is jihad's nexus with violence that forthright Islamophiles concede it. In *The Age of Sacred Terror*, for example, former Clinton officials Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon claim that a "domestication of jihad" has transformed it into an "internal battle" for personal betterment waged through "acts of charity, good works in society, and education." Still, they ruefully attest that jihad grew up as “exclusively actual, physical warfare,” and that the “domestication” they perceive is a “modern-day” contrivance.

So if jihad and violence are joined at the hip, how can the Brotherhood, self-proclaimed jihadists, abandon violence? The same way a fierce army captures territory without firing a single shot, or the Mafia collects usurious loans while busting only the occasional kneecap. The answer, very simply, is extortion, combined with a shrewd appreciation of the ground a timid, multiculti West may be only too willing to cede.

We’re not so shrewd. It has been 30 years since the Khomeinist revolution in Iran and 16 since jihadists declared all-out war on the United States by bombing the World Trade Center. Yet we still understand precious little about radical Islam and the threat this enemy portends. It is a conscious avoidance. Knowledge is power, but it also entails a responsibility to confront the dangers of which one becomes aware. The purpose of jihad is not violence for its own sake; it is to pave the way for the imposition of *sharia*, the Muslim legal code and the necessary precondition for building an Islamic state and society. That is a danger we simply don’t want to deal with: It would require facing up to the brute fact that such a state would be antithetical to American democracy.

Thus, we avert our eyes from our enemies’ goal and fail to recognize both who our enemies are and why the accommodations they demand, some of which seem harmless enough on the surface, should be opposed. Our national-security policy obsesses over means—in particular one tactic, terrorism—while ignoring the end the means seek to accomplish. Because America is a beacon of religious freedom, we’ve limited our focus to operatives who plot and execute acts of terror; the ideology fueling this savagery is not our concern—lest we betray our first principles and smear every Muslim as a terrorist.

This disposition is suicidal, for at least three reasons. First, Islam is not merely a religion. It is a comprehensive socio-economic and political system, which believers take to be ordained by Allah, its elements compulsory and non-negotiable. While those elements include tenets we would regard as a religious creed, these tenets constitute only a fraction of the overarching Islamic project. They’re also not easily distinguished because Islam does not separate mosque and state. When we blinker ourselves to Islamic ideology, in deference to the principle of rendering unto God what is God’s, we ignore a great deal of what, in American society, is to be rendered unto Caesar.

Second, speaking of “Islam” as if there were only one Muslim belief system is a gross oversimplification. Our Manichean public discourse invokes a “true” Islam, distinct from what simply must be the “false” Islam of the terrorists. U.S. officials gush about a monolithic “religion of peace,” while British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith brands terrorism “un-Islamic activity” merely by dint of its being terrorism. But despite the good intentions of “true Islam” dabblers—whose influence among Muslims pales beside that of fundamentalist clerics who’ve studied Islamic jurisprudence for decades—there is not a single Islam. There are many. They have a common core, but numerous interpretations are legitimately identifiable as “Islam.” When we speak of a “true” or “false” Islam, we are speaking nonsense. This shortchanges our understanding of the Muslim world and our influence on it.

What’s more, a counterterrorism strategy premised on delegitimizing as “anti-Islamic” the fundamentalist strains that practice violence is doomed to fail. Though we find them unsavory, these strains boast a rich pedigree, lie squarely within the tradition of Mohammed, and are supported by centuries of scholarship rooted in the literal commands of scripture. To pose a conservative estimate, their adherents number in the tens of millions when we account for both the small percentage of Muslims willing to take up arms and the far larger number who support forcible action (or at least its goals) even though they would not commit terrorist acts themselves. Pretending they represent a bare fringe has left us blind and vulnerable.

Third, means can’t be separated from ends without confusing both. On a gut level, policymakers may understand that jihad is not an end unto itself, but they won’t grapple with the actual end, namely, to establish a Muslim state. Thus they miss the threat and erroneously focus on only one of the jihadist’s means, violence, thinking that to end the violence would be to end radical Islam’s threat to our way of life. By contrast, Islam’s apologists actually do appreciate that jihad is merely a means to something transcendent, but because they refuse to accept jihad’s violent roots, they overlook its corporate nature. Mired in what Judge Robert Bork describes as modern liberalism’s radical individualism, they miss—or refuse to see—that Islam is not predominantly about the individual. It is about the *ummah*, the Muslim nation, establishing and spreading Allah’s law on earth. It is not about becoming a better *person* by doing good deeds, but becoming a better *Muslim* by submitting to this divine cause (the word *Islam* means “submission”). Jihad is shorthand for *jihad fi sabil Allah*: to struggle in the cause of Allah. The *Dictionary of Islam* elaborates that it was established as “a divine institution” for the specific “purpose of advancing Islam”—the belief system, not the individual Muslim. *That* is the end to which the jihadist dedicates himself: to advance Islam. The purpose of jihad is not to blow up buildings and kill infidels. Its purpose is to institute sharia.

Here, it is necessary to address some sleight-of-hand. The Koran contains many an ode to tolerance, most of which are from Mohammed’s early Meccan period, when he was seeking to recruit converts to the new religion. Many such benign injunctions were abrogated by the contrary, brutalizing verses of the later Medinan period, when the warrior prophet spread Islam principally by the sword. That inconvenient fact is ignored by the “religion of peace” crowd, whose unparalleled favorite scripture is Sura 2:256, the instruction that there shall be “no compulsion in religion.” On the basis of this directive, they argue, à la Jacqui Smith, that jihadist violence must be anti-Islamic. *Au contraire.* While militants would surely be delighted if, say, the destruction of the Twin Towers induced everyone to convert, that is not the direct goal of jihadist activity—violent or not. The goal is to induce each targeted jurisdiction to adopt sharia. The Muslim Brotherhood’s chief theoretician, Sayyid Qutb, explained that forcible jihad proceeds whenever Islam is obstructed by “the political system of the state, the socio-economic system based on races and classes, and behind all these, the military power of the government.” This system is then supplanted by Islamic law.

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At that point, Islam can be "addressed to peoples' hearts and minds," purportedly without compulsion, "and they are free to accept or reject it with an open mind."

Jihad is not trying to convert you; it is seeking the imposition of Allah's law. That law happens to be antithetical to bedrock American principles: It establishes a state religion, rejects the freedom of citizens to govern themselves irrespective of a religious code, proscribes freedom of conscience, proscribes economic freedom, destroys the principle of equality under the law, subjugates non-Muslims in the humiliation of dhimmitude, and calls for the execution of homosexuals and apostates. Nevertheless, its adoption produces what Islamists portray as the non-coercive environment in which people then "freely" embrace Islam.

That environment is achieved by violence *only if violence is necessary*. Naturally, the term *jihad* is drenched in gore: Its proponents understood violence would often be necessary to induce adoption of fundamentalist Islam's authoritarian system. But the jihadist needn't savage his targets if Islam can be advanced without a fight. An invading army does not go home if the locals surrender. It pushes forward, adding to its domain until it meets real resistance—at which point it promptly deems itself under siege and gets back to all that "lesser" jihad.

The Muslim Brotherhood has been nothing short of masterful in implementing this jihadist strategy. It is the nerve center, with tentacles spread throughout the world. For example, Hamas—which purports not to do terrorism either, just "resistance"—is the Brotherhood's Palestinian arm, and the Ikhwan rudiments of al-Qaeda, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other Sunni terror groups are well documented. But the majority of Brotherhood branches, like the ones in Syria and Jordan, are ostensibly political and cultural enterprises. In Europe, terrorism analyst Lorenzo Vidino notes that Brotherhood constituents joined forces in 1996 to create the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations, a Brussels-based "network of 42 national and international organizations bringing together youth from over 26 different countries." Here in the U.S., jihadism expert Steven Emerson observes that "nearly all prominent Islamic organizations . . . are rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood."

Their collective game plan is announced for all who care to see on the Brotherhood's website. They seek "the introduction of the Islamic Shariah as the basis for controlling the affairs of state and society." In 2007, the organization's platform called for "spreading and deepening the true concepts of Islam as a complete methodology that regulates all aspects of life." Even more telling, though, is an internal 1991 Brotherhood memorandum made public by the Justice Department during its recent prosecution of an ostensible charity, the Holy Land Foundation, for underwriting terrorism. It states: "The Ikhwan must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and 'sabotaging' its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious over all other religions."

Jihad Watch founder Robert Spencer has aptly labeled this strategy "stealth jihad." It is working. It would not be accurate to say radical Islam is infiltrating American institutions without firing a shot. The purpose of terrorism is to terrorize. We've had plenty of it, and the specter of additional savagery greases the skids for more subtle forms of extortion. Unquestionably, this vulnerability is exacerbated by the multiculturalist bent of institutions dominated by the Left—the academy, the media, and, increasingly, government. Nonetheless, when droves of Muslims riot over cartoon depictions of the prophet, a schoolteacher's innocuous choice of "Mohammed" as nickname for the class teddy bear, or false reports of Koran defilement at Guantanamo Bay, conditions are ever more ripe for the grievance-mongers to seize the advantage.

In rationalizing that the only real problem is terrorism, our government promotes the project behind the violence by embracing Muslim leaders, no matter how radical they are, as long as they are not currently in the act of terrorizing. In 2005, for example, Alberto Fernandez, then the State Department's director of public diplomacy in the Middle East, praised the Brotherhood's spiritual leader, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, as an "intelligent and thoughtful voice from the region," a "respected scholar . . . worthy of the deepest respect" and "deserv[ing of] our attention." Then as now, Qaradawi had been banned from the U.S. for promoting terrorism. Yet Fernandez chirped that Qaradawi's role was "for the Muslim *ummah* to decide." And so it did: rioting over the Danish cartoons and taking up arms against the "occupiers" in Iraq, just like he told them to.

To win fundamentalist support for its democracy-building in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Bush administration helped write new constitutions that not only established Islam as the state religion but installed sharia as a primary source of law—a move that the State Department, far from being embarrassed by, called attention to as part of its energetic Muslim "outreach." Embarrassment didn't settle in until later, when, to the surprise of absolutely no one who troubles himself to learn about sharia, an Afghan court attempted to sentence to death, for the "crime" of apostasy, a Christian who'd converted from Islam years earlier. (The defendant was finally whisked to safety, in a non-Muslim country.) Similarly, in Iraq, Ayatollah Ali Sistani, much admired by the administration for his support of democratic elections, issued a fatwa calling for the murder of all homosexuals.

The mainstreaming of sharia—under the delusion that it is perfectly harmonious with Western democracy and culture—is picking up steam here at home. Minnesota, with its huge influx of Somali immigrants sowing Muslim enclaves, is a harbinger of things to come. The state was the site of the infamous 2006 "flying imams" incident, in which six Muslim clerics were thrown off a flight after allegedly intimidating passengers and crew by aping the behavior of the 9/11 hijackers. They complained and filed a lawsuit with the assistance of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)—a Brotherhood-rooted organization whose communications director has advocated the conversion of the U.S. into a sharia state (and some of whose members have been implicated in terrorism investigations). Our craven federal government reacted by subjecting 45,000 airport-security officers to Islamic sensitivity training. On its website, the Department of Homeland Security published a CAIR press release, which brayed about the fact that CAIR was regularly asked to advise DHS agencies on matters of Islamic culture. Remarkably, even as DHS and the FBI were "partnering" with CAIR, the Justice Department was citing the "civil rights" organization as an unindicted co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation case.

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IDENTITY THEFT ALERT:

Special Report: Tax-related identity theft up over 600%

It appears tax season is also hunting season for identity thieves.

According to a report by the IRS, tax related identity theft increased by more than six times over the past five years.

"And that was following an increase of over 1000 percent between 1999 and 2003," said Todd Davis, CEO of LifeLock, the nation's leading identity theft protection service.

"Identity theft has absolutely become one of the biggest problems we have facing taxpayers," Davis added.

Refund-related crimes can occur when identity thieves use a victim's identity to file a fraudulent tax return and receive a refund before the victim files their real return. Identity thieves can also put in change of address requests so your return goes to their address.

"Some criminals still get your check the old fashioned way – by simply stealing your mail," Davis said. "But more and more, all identity theft is switching to online forums."

How Big of a Problem is Identity Theft?

In this electronic age your information is everywhere. Even if you're careful, you can't be sure everyone you conduct business with is as safe as you are.

In 2008, approximately 33.6 million records containing sensitive information were involved in security breaches. That's given rise to a 22% increase in identity theft victims over the previous year and a five-year high of nearly 10 million victims at a cost of $48 billion.

Financial costs aside, identity theft victims can spend hundreds of frustrating hours talking to credit card companies, banks, police, and credit bureaus repairing the damage.

When you factor in that thieves may hold onto information for six months or longer before using it, and that a single stolen identity may be used over and over again for years, the full weight of the crime really begins to take shape.

One victim had two homes purchased and furnished using her name and personal information. Then, to add insult to injury, the thieves took out second mortgages on both homes as well.

Another had his identity stolen at age seven, but didn't find out until ten years later when he was denied a student loan and a job due to poor credit. He was 17-years old and $40,000 in debt because someone bought a houseboat in his name. It took him 10 years to clear his name.

Yes, That's His Real Number

So why is LifeLock CEO Todd Davis still giving out his real Social Security number to anyone who will listen?

"Because between LifeLock's proactive approach and our $1 Million Total Service Guarantee, I'm more confident than ever in LifeLock's ability to continue keeping my identity safe," Davis said.

- *A 22% increase in identity theft victims.*
- *A five-year high of nearly 10 million victims.*

"Of course, you should never share your Social Security number unless completely necessary," he added, "but for the record, mine really is 457-55-5462."

LifeLock became the nation's leader in identity theft protection by taking a proactive approach to protecting consumers' identities from criminals. Why is that so important?

In the past, many people looked to credit monitoring after becoming victims of identity theft. According to Davis, that was the problem.

"Credit monitoring does nothing to stop identity theft. It only alerts you after there has been suspicious activity on your account," Davis said. "LifeLock works to help stop identity theft before it happens by taking proactive steps to reduce the risk of identity thieves ruining your credit and good name – even if your information falls into the wrong hands."

More importantly, what LifeLock doesn't stop, they promise to fix at their expense, up to $1,000,000. That's their $1 Million Total Service Guarantee.

Does It Work? Look at the Facts.

"With over a million LifeLock members, statistically you would expect to see over 30,000 identity thefts annually, costing our members hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars," Davis said.

"Now, those are thefts that would come under the protection of our $1 Million Total Service Guarantee, so our members would be out nothing. But we haven't seen anywhere near 30,000 victims. We haven't even seen 300."

The fact is, less than one percent of over one million LifeLock members have ever reported a compromised identity, and because of LifeLock's guarantee, none of them were ever out the time or money experienced by other victims.

Protection for All.

Davis says there are steps you can take to minimize your risk, but he believes a consumers best bet is to protect themselves with a service like LifeLock.

"LifeLock works around the clock monitoring criminal websites for the illegal selling and trading of our members' information," Davis said. "We also notify members when a change of address is made in their name to make sure it's not an identity thief rerouting their mail."

In addition, LifeLock will have your name taken off of pre-approved credit card lists, and help put you in greater control of who has access to your credit.

"And of course all our members have the peace of mind knowing they're protected by our $1 Million Total Service Guarantee," he added. "There's a reason we're #1."

If you'd like to have the same peace of mind this tax season that Davis and the rest of LifeLock's members enjoy, he'd like to give you LifeLock free for 30 days, plus a 10% discount off the regular membership price. Simply visit lifelock.com or call 800-LIFELOCK and use promotion code NATIONALREVIEW.

30 DAYS FREE + 10% OFF

PROMO CODE **NATIONALREVIEW**

LIFELOCK.COM 1-800-LIFELOCK (543-3562)

No payment, no obligation for 30 days. After 30 days your credit card will automatically be billed. You can cancel at any time without penalty. Terms and Conditions: Enrollment in Lifelock requires a valid Social Security number. LifeLock $1 Million Total Service Guarantee in effect upon enrollment.

In Minneapolis, cab drivers began refusing to ferry airport passengers believed to be carrying alcohol. Rather than revoking licenses, state authorities opted to consult the Muslim American Society, perhaps the Brotherhood's principal American arm. Afterwards, the cabbies were cajoled into providing service—not because their discriminatory practice was wrong but on the (dubious) theory that sharia was not actually violated if alcohol was only transported, not consumed.

Minnesota schools are also in the jihad's sights. A graduate education student was ousted from a high school last year while doing course-required field work. Prone to seizures, the student required the assistance of a specially trained dog. Sharia, however, pronounces canines unclean and prohibits touching them. The Muslim teens threatened to kill the dog. When the student complained, his university shamefully capitulated, awarding him credit without the requisite course-work. An official rationalized that it was "important to respect different cultures" and that the accommodation was simply "part of the growth process when we become more diverse."

"Accommodation," meanwhile, may have reached a new level regarding Tarek ibn Ziyad Academy (TIZA) in Inner Grove Heights, Minn.: taxpayer funding for what appears to be a madrassa camouflaged as a charter school. TIZA is sponsored by an entity called "Islamic Relief," and its executive director is a Muslim imam. It is housed in the headquarters of the Muslim American Society of Minnesota (the declared mission of which is "establishing Islam in Minnesota"), in a building that also contains a mosque. Students pray daily, eat *halal* meals, and attend "Islamic studies" courses—officially, after the close of the regular school day, but witness accounts suggest it is more like a staple of the regular workload.

And that's not all Minnesotans are funding. The state has recently taken to facilitating "Muslim mortgages." Sharia does not permit interest to be assessed in financial transactions. One might think that's not a government's problem—but Minnesota now buys homes from willing sellers and then resells them to Muslim buyers in transactions that disguise interest by higher costs and fees. That is, American taxpayer dollars are employed to promote conformance with Islamic law.

It is but one aspect of a burgeoning national field known as "sharia-compliant finance." Strapped American financial institutions, anxious to tap the liquidity available in oil-producing Muslim nations, are encouraged to structure financial transactions that factor in interest payments without calling them that. The interest might, for example, be siphoned off to pay zakat, the Islamic obligation of charitable giving, with the arrangement blessed by an advisory board composed of experts in Islamic law. This is problematic on multiple levels: Many charities have proven to be fronts for terrorist organizations; the banks' sharia advisers may be fundamentalists who steer business to suspect charities; and, most important, the upshot of sharia compliance is to validate—to regularize in our financial system—a legal code with significant anti-American, anti-capitalist features.

Minnesota is a telling ripple from a growing wave. The Organization of the Islamic Conference, comprising 57 nations (not to mention the "State of Palestine"), is lobbying in the U.N. for a revised declaration of human rights that would make criticism of Islam a violation of international law. Muslim activists have succeeded in enacting hate-speech laws and speech codes throughout Europe and Canada that criminalize and create civil liability for criticism of Islam. British courts are home to the noxious practice known as "libel tourism," permitting defamation suits against American journalists and academics who write about Saudi society's promotion of radical Islam—suits that would instantly be dismissed under American law.

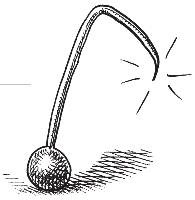
And where Western governments cannot directly forbid examination of radical Islamic ideology, they are using their muscle to suppress it. In February, Geert Wilders, a Dutch legislator, was barred from entering Britain by Jacqui Smith's Home Office, despite having been invited by a member of the House of Lords to screen his controversial film, *Fitna*, which highlights the well-established connection between Koranic preaching and jihadist terror. The same Labour government that has demanded the return to Britain of numerous terrorist detainees held at Guantanamo Bay refused admission to an official of a fellow EU government due to fear of offending Muslims.

Last year, the Homeland Security Department, after consulting with what it described as a "wide variety of Muslim American leaders" whom it otherwise declined to identify, issued language guidance for the government: an attempt to purge our public discourse of terms like "Islamofascism" and, of course, "jihad." Fastening their rose-tinted glasses, DHS experts explained the premise of the guidance: "Many so-called 'Islamic' terrorist groups [*so-called?*] twist and exploit the tenets of Islam to justify violence." Exploit, sure, but *twist*? To justify jihadist violence, how much does one need to "twist" such scriptures as (to take just one of many possible examples) Sura 9:123: "O ye who believe, fight those of the disbelievers who are near you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty unto him"?

The Muslim Public Affairs Council took time out from its campaign to have Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad removed from the government's roster of formally designated terrorist organizations to congratulate DHS on the new guidance and pat itself on the back for both its "regular . . . engagement with government agencies including [DHS]" and its long advocacy of a "nuanced approach" that stresses "the importance of decoupling Islam with [*sic*] terrorism."

MPAC has a point. The problem isn't just terrorism. Not by a long shot. The problem is that radical Islam, by lawfare and intimidation as well as by terror, is working assiduously to validate and ultimately establish its legal code in the U.S. and throughout the West.

All of this can be reversed. American law need not embrace sharia. Our system guarantees only freedom of conscience—to believe what one chooses to believe—not a right to have those beliefs accommodated, adopted, or imposed. Regulations codifying sharia can be undone. It is unlikely, short of another terrorist attack, that Congress would revisit the 1990 Immigration Act, which, at the behest of leftist Democrats, effectively gutted ideology-based exclusions of aliens committed to the eradication of American constitutional democracy. Still, though such a reconsideration would be welcome, there is no reason, in the meantime, for U.S. government agencies to be "partnering" with Islamic groups that take their cues from the Muslim Brotherhood. Those organizations are radical, and mean our society mortal harm, even if they're not blowing up buildings. The main challenge today is not protecting the buildings; it's protecting ourselves from what's going on inside the buildings. **NR**



The Bent Pin BY FLORENCE KING

Marry in Haste, Repent at Leisure

As the Obama administration enters its third month I keep thinking of an old rhyming joke. It's about an absent-minded girl who, being incapable of remembering her mistakes long enough to learn from them, gets herself into unbelievable dilemmas, each one worse than the last. I don't remember the details but the punchline is running through my head:

"Oh, my goodness! What have I done? I married the father instead of the son!"

America has awakened next to Obama, and if he's said to be grumpy in the morning, we are grumpier. It's been less than 100 days so technically we are still on our honeymoon, but considering the traumas we have already experienced, we are like the Victorian bride saddled with her mother's advice on how to behave on a leisurely 19th-century honeymoon in Italy: "Be as pleasant and cheerful as possible, and remember to exclaim over the ruins."

Millions of financially strapped Americans are now at the point Julie Christie reached in *Doctor Zhivago* when Lara sobbed, "This is an awful time to be alive!" But another trauma, more subtle but nonetheless powerful, is an unfinished feeling, an inchoate sense that something that was supposed to happen didn't happen and now the moment has passed, leaving us suspended in that state of nerve-wracking peace and quiet known as anticlimax. When we elected a black president by a landslide we expected to be rewarded with some kind of new dawn, an instant golden age that would render us at peace with ourselves and as one with the world overnight. It was the American pursuit of quick 'n' easy applied to epiphanies, and we bet the farm on it.

Obama is also caught in anticlimax. To Bill Clinton, the best thing about being president was campaigning because the crush of warm bodies satisfied his bottomless need to be loved. But Obama, who is much more standoffish than he would have us believe, would like nothing so much as to spend the rest of his life as a fly in amber in Grant Park on election night, because to him, the best thing about being president is being president-elect. Chosen but not yet Called. Is that a great gig or what? It must be: He invented it officially with a plethora of signs reading The Office of the President Elect and hung them on his lecterns whenever he went out to announce that America's problems were indeed dire, but even though he knew how to solve them, at the moment he was powerless to do it.

A funny thing happened on the day he was plucked out of this glorious sinecure and thrust into the real job. The whole world expected his inaugural address to put Cicero to shame, but instead the Silver Tongue gave it a lick and a promise, delivering what amounted to a civic luncheon speech. Then came the State of the Union That Wasn't, so weighted down by bureaucratic droning, list-making, and example-giving that he sounded as uninspired as the anonymous clerks who used to read the State of the Union to Congress back in the old days. After a campaign season throbbing with O Tempora and O Mores, all we got was a lousy T-shirt with a picture of O Bama advertising *Oratory for Dummies*.

People felt betrayed without fully understanding why. His media claques were quick to make excuses for him (he had chosen, in his wisdom, to cut to the chase; he was so confident that he felt no need to repeat himself; etc.) but the spate of teleprompter jokes that soon made the rounds sounds like a dismayed bride being as pleasant and cheerful as possible while exclaiming over the ruins.

The ex-president-elect also demolished another one of his own images: the cool, efficient, No-Drama Obama. He might not have put Cicero to shame in his inaugural but the confusion he generated with his impetuous cabinet picks has so shamed the annexation of Schleswig-Holstein that it will never be able to show its face in a history book again.

It was the running of the commerce secretaries hosted by Pamplona. The comic-opera figure in the whole who-struck-John is Tom Daschle, who was in and out so fast that the revolving door almost knocked him down. Certain to be the most memorable figure, however, is Timothy Geithner, the Treasury Secretary with a Plan, or the Plan without a Treasury Secretary, we won't know until they put an asterisk beside his name like Roger Maris and he becomes honored and disdained at one and the same time. Obama keeps assuring us that Timmy is doing a heckava job, but we can be sure of only one thing: He's the very spit of Peter Sellers. One look at his dancing-peppercorn eyes, the puckish sideways smile peeking up from under his ducked head, the dismissive *tant pis* gesture when he rotates his wrist, and *voilà*!—it's Sellers playing a French bookkeeper who accidentally destroys the entire global banking system by installing his tax software wrong.

How can someone as brilliant as Obama is reputed to be traumatize so many so fast? After all, he's a reader, a writer, a thinker. He's reflective, imaginative, inquisitive, subjective, sensitive—name your -tive, he's it. It's important to emphasize his -tives because we want to be able to stop exclaiming over his ruins without sounding racist. Is there someone we all know to whom we can compare him without regard to race so that we might understand him better?

Yes, as a matter of fact there is:

"At first Scarlett was shocked and disappointed that Ashley did not immediately take hold and make the mill pay double what it had paid under her management. He was so smart and he had read so many books and there was no reason at all why he should not make a brilliant success and lots of money. [But] . . . his errors, his utter lack of business judgment. . . . Ashley could never make a quick estimate in his head and give a price that was correct, as she could. And she sometimes wondered if he'd ever learn to distinguish between planking and sills." **NR**

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The Long View BY ROB LONG

A Twitter-istory of the World . . .

Spent all A.M. trying to walk upright. Any1 in the Twitterverse had success at that yet? Also: what's the 411 in re: hunting, gathering vs. land cultivation?

Big yellow god in sky totally warm, totally awesome! Wish it didn't have to die every night tho. Anyone else feel the same way?

Livin' large in Ur! Home of the world's coolest ziggurat! Twitpic here: http://twitpic.com/23ddf

Awesome wooden horse just arrived at gates from, like, nowhere. So freakin' cool. Draggin' it in w/my bros. Wooden Horse FTW!!

@odysseus where r u?

Really digging @caesar and the new transparency. This new guy gets it. He's even on Twitter! Roman Empire 2.0!!

Any other Twitter peeps here in the crowd, listening to the dude in the sandals up on the mount give his sermon or whatevs? Say hey if you are!

Hanging with the Vandals and Visigoths. These guys are just throwing out awesome vibes. Rome is so "old media." Time for a reboot!

I keep feeling like we're all in the "middle" of something. But what? Anyone else ready for something new? Like, I dunno, more sophisticated use of perspective in painting? Just sayin'

@spanishinquisition I owe some Jewish guys some money and I'm not happy about it. Can u guys help? Would really like some debt relief.

"There b monsters" my ass. The world is so totally round it's not even funny. If u keep going u get 2 great beaches. Am bringing back tomatoes. Trust me: just eat one.

Liked but did not love the Sist. Chap. Too high to see all the details plus pushy crowd. Could tell he painted it on back due to paint drips all over floor.

Lepanto?? WTH?? Turkish fleet=total FAIL.

The new English queen is a virgin? Um, really? I mean, really? Hard to believe, but with that hairstyle, I guess it's logical.

The new world is cool! Really unspoiled and sustainable environment. Also: indigenous peoples who dress totally funky with earrings etc. on the guys too!!! Downside: hunger, winter, scalping.

Please DM me!! I will pay anything for a 2lip bulb!!! Top prices paid for 2lip bulbs!! DM for details!!!

Suddenly feeling extremely enlightened. Really getting into science, logic, etc. Any thoughts in re that or rights of man etc.?

Tweetup at Boston Hrbor! Let's deal with the tea tax Twitter style! Bring snax.

Please RT!!!! The British r coming!!! Please RT!!!

Apparently, Marie Antoinette was just using an expression. She isn't actually going to give us any cake. I love cake so I'm seriously bummed. Maybe even more than bummed. Need 2 think about it.

Gr8 idea to buy this land! New Orleans v. cool. Food sorta spicy but nice vibe. Great cocktails. Worried about flooding, though. @thomasjefferson had the right idea.

Who's the short French guy with the major 'tude? What the dilly, homes? Who died and made you God? You want to invade Russia? Fine. Take it. PS: bring mittens.

@williamtecumsehsherman where r u? last we heard you were in Alabama. Now Georgia? How fast r u going?? Pls stop at Savannah.

Nothing out here but grazing lands and mineral deposits. Head west, Twitterverse. Avoid Apaches. Bring snax.

@donnerparty Where r u?

Watching Archduke Ferdinand cruise by in his open carriage. What a jerk. Still, I guess if he got whacked it'd be a whole big thing.

Watching the market go nuts and have decided not to miss this rally. Putting it all in equities. By 1929, I'm going to have major bank!

Anybody else getting a weird vibe from this new dude Stalin? Seems nice but there's something about him. Or am I paranoid?

Lots of planes with Japanese writing on them just buzzed by. Wonder what that's about. Oh well. Another awesome day in Hawaii. We should give them statehood.

Wonder if they'll let @elvispresley do that pelvis swiveling thang? Be cool if they did, but they're probably 2 uptight.

@josephpkennedy how many votes do u want in cook county? Need $$ 4 Tuesday. DM me.

OMG!! OMG!! Just walked on the moon! http://twitpic.com/245gy Moonwalk! FTW!!

@rmnixon omg! 4got 2 take tape off door in h20gate! Got nabbed by rent-a-cop. Please call @ggordonliddy to handle this! Thnx!!

RT from @ronaldreagan: Hey! @mikhailgorbachev and @erichhonecker! Tear down this wall!

By the Waters . . .

ROSS DOUTHAT

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS, recently departed and greatly missed, enjoyed four overlapping careers in the American public square. Taken on its own, each would have been sufficient to guarantee the fame of a lesser, less prolific figure. And each, remarkably, was in addition to his primary vocation as a Lutheran and then a Catholic priest in New York City, ministering to believers from the lowest and highest levels of a metropolis that he often described, with only a touch of waggishness, as a foretaste of the New Jerusalem.

The least appreciated of these four careers, perhaps, was the one that flowed most directly from his daily labors as a priest. This was Neuhaus the spiritual and pastoral writer, drawing on his experiences as a minister and as a Christian to produce some of the finest religious meditations of our era. His topics—Christ's passion, mortality, the work of ministry—were scandalous in the way the Christian gospel always is, but they were less immediately controversial than his other work, and received somewhat less attention as a result.

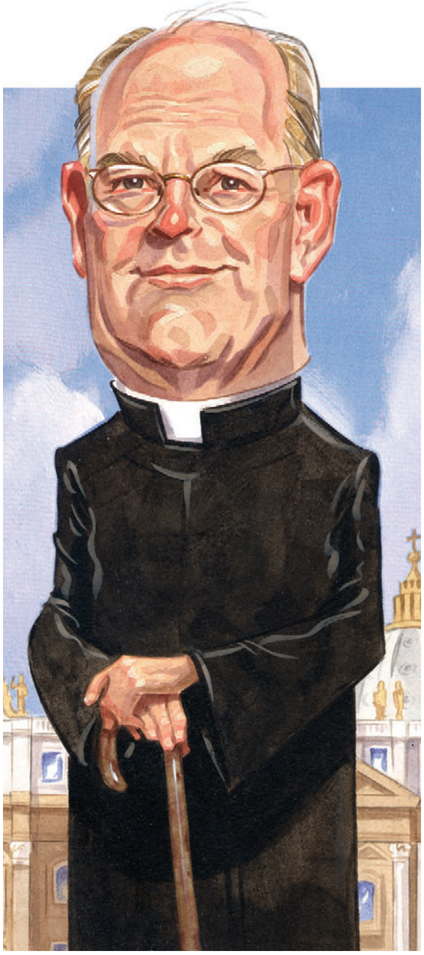
They were overshadowed, in particular, by Neuhaus the intellectual powerhouse—steeped in the great controversies of modernity and postmodernity, engaged with theologians past and present, and sparring happily with the *philosophes* of this age. This Neuhaus was a political theologian (though he would qualify and contest that term), and above all an *American* political theologian. The heir to Orestes Brownson and John Courtney Murray, he arguably outstripped them both, working tirelessly to advance a distinctively Christian and Catholic liberalism that would be consonant with the American experiment, and perhaps necessary to its survival.

If the philosophical Neuhaus was a bit too heavy and theoretical for your taste, though, there was also Neuhaus the journalist and culture warrior, stooping to conquer every month in the pages of *First Things*. And if it was action that you wanted, instead of theory or polemic, there was Neuhaus the activist, harnessing his intellectual gifts to larger projects—civil rights, Jewish-Christian dialogue, Evangelical-Catholic rapprochement, the right to life. Few 20th-century intellectuals distinguished themselves in both the cause of desegregation and the cause of the unborn, and fewer still were a public presence in both movements. But when Martin Luther King was marching, there was Neuhaus beside him, and when the right-to-life movement needed champions, there was Neuhaus once again.

In a sense, the breadth and variation of these overlapping Neuhauses probably made him less celebrated, during his lifetime, than a narrower writer might have been. Certainly this was true of his activism on behalf of the unborn, which tilted him slowly but irrevocably into political conservatism, and cost him a host of bien-pensant admirers in the process. As his great friend Robert George noted recently, "Neuhaus was poised to become the nation's next great liberal public intellectual—the Reinhold Niebuhr of his generation." And so he could have been, had he only been somewhat less agitated about abortion—which is to say, had he been something other than the idealist that he was.

Likewise, had he been willing to set aside his theological and philosophical concerns, he could have been one of the great political pundits of the age, making mincemeat of his rivals on cable news shows and op-ed pages. Alternatively, had he been willing to depoliticize his writings, he might have had a wider audience among the spiritually inclined. (There are doubtless religious leaders, for instance, who have never considered picking up *Freedom for Ministry*, Neuhaus's rich theological consideration of the pastor's vocation, because they've known him as the slashing polemicist from the back pages of *First Things*.)

But in time, all of these Neuhauses will find the audiences that they deserve. His era will pass away, but his words will not pass away. Long after the controversies of the moment have given way to struggles unforeseen, Richard John Neuhaus's breadth and depths and variations will still be winning admirers to his many ways of thinking about our fallen world—and to the larger cause, Christ and his Church, to which he gave almost every moment in his 72 years.


Fr. Richard John Neuhaus

DARREN GYGI

FOR the reader coming to him for the first time, his final book, *American Babylon: Notes of a Christian Exile* (Basic, 288 pp., $26.95), published posthumously in March, serves primarily as an introduction to Neuhaus the intellectual heavy hitter. The book has its polemical and devotional aspects—it touches on the new atheists and Peter Singer, on the challenge of Islam, and of course on *Roe* v. *Wade*, and culminates in an extended meditation on the nature of Christian hope. But *American Babylon*'s primary concern is the intersection of theology and political philosophy, and its broad theme is the same one that Saint Augustine wrestled with long ago: the proper attitude that would-be inhabitants of the City of God should take toward the City of Man in which they find themselves in exile.

Beneath this broad canopy, the argument does not always flow as smoothly as it could. This is a book compiled largely from previously published material, which has been amended, expanded, and stitched together, and *American Babylon*'s structure often feels more jury-rigged than organic. The individual chapters are impressive on their own, but the connective tissue is sometimes weak.

But this is a strength as well as a weakness, since it means that *American Babylon*, like paradise in C. S. Lewis's *The Last Battle*, is larger seen from within than from without.

Neuhaus's major intellectual preoccupations are all well represented: the relationships Christianity has with the American experiment, with the Jews, and with postmodernity—and, above all, the tangled relationship, for believers, between political action and eschatological expectation.

Writing about relationships, inevitably, means writing about problems. A purely descriptive subtitle for the book might have been "Tensions in Christian Thought," because Neuhaus is often working at the places where a balance must be struck, a fine distinction threaded, or a mystery analyzed without being quite resolved. There are times when he explicitly argues for embracing uncertainty—as with the Christian relationship to Judaism, for instance, where in place of the coherence of a supersessionism in which the advent of Christ makes Judaism obsolete, he proposes a kind of higher diffidence about God's purposes, and a "shared exploration of what we do not know, and perhaps cannot know until the end time."

But embracing a radical uncertainty in some theological specifics does not require embracing it promiscuously. Elsewhere in the book, Neuhaus wrestles at length with Christianity's ambiguous relationship to both modernity and postmodernity, but ultimately dismisses the seductive idea that religious believers should side with deconstructionists and ironists in their effort to disarm the "hegemonic pretensions" of the Enlightenment. To a Christian tired of being told that rationality alone, unsupported by tradition or revelation, will sustain the political and moral architecture of rights-based liberalism, the postmodernist assault on reason itself can feel like a heady tonic. But "for one tradition of reason (for example, Thomism) to form an alliance," Neuhaus writes, "or even a temporary coalition, with unreason in order to undo another tradition of reason (for example, value-neutral Enlightenment rationality) is a perilous tactic." You can use Nietzsche to disarm Voltaire, but then you run the risk of being ruled by Nietzsche—or worse.

Which is to say that Neuhaus remained invested, to the end, in what was always his biggest idea: that Christianity could and ought to help sustain the American version of the Enlightenment project, rather than abandon it, and that liberal regimes could and ought to turn to religion—and specifically to the Judeo-Christian idea of the natural law—for a "morally compelling account" of their own premises and institutions. "This regime of liberal democracy, of republican self-governance, is not self-evidently good and just," Neuhaus insists. "An account must be given. Reasons must be given. They must be reasons that draw authority from that which is higher than ourselves, from that which transcends us, from that to which we are precedently, ultimately obliged."

During Neuhaus's lifetime, this position was assailed by both the secular Left (as a stalking horse for theocracy) and the Catholic Right (for yoking Christianity to the service of an inherently anti-Christian regime). It will continue to be assailed, no doubt, so long as he is read. Those interested in doing so, however, will find in *American Babylon* a Neuhaus who has anticipated their critiques, and indeed a Neuhaus who accepts them as accurate descriptions of possible worlds, and possible Americas.

To liberals worried about the perils of a sacralized politics, he concedes that American theology—Protestant theology, in particular, from the Puritans down to contemporary evangelicalism—has too often "suffered from an ecclesiological deficit, leading to an ecclesiological substitution of America for the Church through time." As a result, American Christians live in constant danger of "forgetting that America, too, is Babylon." To Christians worried that the American experiment has been tending inevitably toward a secular nihilism, meanwhile, he allows that the "low but solid" principles of the American founding (in Leo Strauss's famous phrase) may yet prove "too low, and not solid enough."

His Christian liberalism is ultimately a balancing act, then—constantly in danger of tipping over into an idolatrous Christianity that confuses America with the Church and vice versa, or into an idolatrous liberalism that acknowledges no authority higher than Hobbes's Leviathan, or the imperial self.

Neuhaus lived and died in hope, convinced that this balancing act could guarantee the survival of the American experiment. But he lived and died a realist as well. *American Babylon* is optimistic that the marriage of Christianity and liberalism can survive its current strains. But this optimism is tempered throughout by the awareness that history has many cunning passages, and many ways of disappointing you.

FOR a sense of where history has fulfilled Neuhaus's hopes, and where they have been disappointed, it's instructive to go back two decades to *The Catholic Moment*, a long analysis of the Roman Catholic Church's condition and prospects that Neuhaus penned in 1987, three years before he left Lutheranism for Rome. Less famous than *The Naked Public Square* (1984), it's arguably a better blueprint to the work that Neuhaus was engaged in across the last two decades—and a better measuring stick for how that work has fared.

Written in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, and amid the intellectual and demographic dead-ending of the Protestant establishment, *The Catholic Moment* descried an enormous opportunity for the Roman Church. "This is the moment in which the Roman Catholic Church in the world can and should be the lead church in proclaiming the gospel," Neuhaus wrote. And more, he added, in a passage that his friends and enemies alike would often quote in the years that followed, this ought to be the moment when “the Roman Catholic Church in the United States assumes its rightful role in the culture-forming task of constructing a religiously informed public philosophy for the American experiment in ordered liberty.”

It was a cumbersome turn of phrase, but a startling suggestion—that Catholicism, long considered an alien force in American life, might hold the key to “renew[ing] the American experiment in liberal democracy.”

The Church’s two intertwined missions—to the world, and to America—could only be accomplished, Neuhaus argued, if Catholicism renewed itself by remaining itself, resisting the temptations to become Protestant on the one hand and Marxist on the other. Much of *The Catholic Moment* is taken up with a critique of Protestantizing tendencies within the North American Church, which would turn Catholicism into one dull denomination among many, and with the challenge of liberation theology in the Third World, which would transform the Church into a revolutionary movement devoted to the immanentization of the eschaton. Against liberal Catholicism and revolutionary Catholicism, Neuhaus defended (albeit with more qualifications than in later works) the efforts of John Paul II and Joseph Ratzinger to revive the sense of authority and particularity in the Church, and to renew Catholicism’s insistence that “the Christian Gospel is not one symbolic expression among others of the universal phenomenon of religion, but is the controlling statement of truth by which all reality . . . is rightly understood.”

The two decades that followed saw the partial vindication of his hopes. Marxism went the way of all flesh, taking much of liberation theology with it. Liberal Catholicism gradually exhausted itself, aging into irrelevance as the hoped-for Protestantization of the Church was delayed and delayed, as Ratzinger became Benedict XVI, and as the intellectual initiative within the Church passed decisively to Neuhaus’s side of the argument about what Catholicism ought to be.

In American politics, meanwhile, a “religiously informed public philosophy” rooted in Catholic ideas about natural law became the common ground where many believers—Catholic and Protestant, Jewish and Mormon—met to shape an ecumenical religious conservatism. By the turn of the millennium, it was not uncommon to hear liberals complaining about the “Catholic brains” behind the American Right. Richard John Neuhaus’s influence over the Bush administration was no doubt overstated, but if you listened to Bush’s rhetoric on issues ranging from poverty to bioethics, you would be forgiven for thinking that the president was a Catholic neoconservative, rather than a Texas evangelical.

But the last eight years proved to be difficult ones for Neuhaus’s project. The American Catholic Church, which was seemingly poised to move into the space that the Protestant mainline once occupied, instead endured the agony of the sex-abuse scandals, which left its leadership ill-equipped for “culture-forming tasks” of any sort. The rhetoric of George W. Bush suggested the advent of a “Catholic moment” in American politics, but that moment evaporated along with his popularity, sending religious conservatism staggering into political exile with the rest of the Republican party.

More general trends were discouraging as well. In the 1970s and 1980s, the decline of liberal Christianity, Protestant and Catholic alike, opened the door for the growth of religious bodies that were at once traditional and forward-looking. But by the 21st century, the growth of this “post-liberal” Christianity appeared to be hitting a ceiling. Recent surveys suggest that the American public—whose abiding religiosity Neuhaus often took for granted—is turning in increasing numbers to a militant secularism, a dopey pantheism, or the ersatz Christianity that the sociologist Christian Smith has termed “moralistic therapeutic deism.”

These setbacks may be temporary. But in the age of Obama, it must be said, the prospects for a Catholic-infused renewal of the American experiment look dimmer than they’ve been in years.

But these are hardly grounds for despair among those Christians who shared in Neuhaus’s hopes. His signal intellectual proposal, like John Courtney Murray’s before him, was that Roman Catholicism offered not merely a refuge from secular society, but a “wisdom for

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the world," which "has everything to do with the right ordering of our lives together in 'the City of Man.'" But he never suggested that offering a "public theology" of this sort, and seeking political transformation along with it, was more than a portion of the Church's mission.

Out of H. Richard Niebuhr's five potential models for Christian engagement with the culture, which Neuhaus was fond of citing—the Church against the world, the Church of the world, the Church above the world, the Church as the transformer of the world, and the Church and world in paradox—Neuhaus's stated preference was for the final model, since only paradox seemed sufficiently capacious, and capable of holding the first four in tension all at once.

"The Church is at points against the world," he wrote in *The Catholic Moment*, "but always for the world. It is above the world by virtue of its participation in the transcendent, and it is ahead of the world by its anticipation of a future time, yet it is always of the world. And it is transformer of the world, not merely by providing a spiritual energy for existing goals of change but, most importantly, by reminding the world of its incompleteness, by preventing prideful or despairing actions of premature closure, by keeping the world open to the promised transformation that is the destiny of Church and world alike."

In word and deed alike, Neuhaus provided as much "spiritual energy for existing goals of change" as any figure of his era. But it's a testament to his *own* capaciousness that we will be able to turn to him for guidance and inspiration even in eras vastly different from his own—eras in which his type of political project seems unnecessary, and eras in which it seems impossible.

He wrote for our American Babylon, but for all the Babylons to come as well—for good regimes and wicked ones, and for those regimes that are not so bad that Christians cannot work within them, but not so good that we can do so happily. And he will be returned to again and again, for as long as this exile endures, by all of those whose Christian hope enables them—in the final words of his final book—to "hail from afar the New Jerusalem and know that it is all time toward home." **NR**

Paleo Khan

CHARLOTTE ALLEN

In *The Dangerous Book for Boys*, the name Genghis Khan appears precisely once. It's a passing reference, toward the end, in a section on the Great Wall of China. Yet co-author Conn Iggulden thinks Genghis is worth far more than that. When he isn't writing about how to tie knots or conveying other lessons of boyhood, he's a historical novelist—and he has just completed a rollicking trilogy of books on the Mongolian conqueror.

He has chosen an excellent subject. During the 13th century, the Mongol warlord Genghis Khan and his sons, grandsons, and generals built the largest (in land mass) empire the world has ever known. By 1227, the year of Genghis's death at age 65 or thereabouts, the Mongol empire stretched from Korea to the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, incorporating large swathes of China, northern India, Afghanistan, Persia, Georgia, Armenia, and the present-day Islamic states that were once part of the Soviet Union. Not bad for the illiterate, impoverished son of a murdered tribal chieftain; for a warlord whose military victories outside the freezing Central Asian steppe-lands near today's Ulaanbaatar where he was born were all achieved during the last 20 years or so of his life.

Genghis spent his late teens, his twenties, and most of his thirties "unifying"—that is, destroying all possible rivals in—the constantly warring tribes of the Mongols, their chief regional enemies, the Tartars, and others, until in 1206 a council of chieftains named him "great khan" of the pan-Mongol confederation he had forged, and he took the name Genghis (his given name had been Temujin). By this time, Genghis's army had grown from zero to as many as 200,000 men, nearly all of them astride almost unimaginably hardy Mongolian ponies that could cover 140 miles a day if they had to, and armed with double longbows laminated from wood, horn, and sinew whose iron-tipped arrows, leaving the bow at 200 miles per hour while the bowman rode at full gallop, could strike a target half a mile away.

Let the conquest of the known world begin!

After Genghis's death, his exploits were written down by his countrymen in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, which turned him into a semi-mythological figure. Meanwhile, his son Ogedei (1185–1241), who succeeded him as great khan, and his grandsons Mongke and Kublai (he of the stately pleasure dome) continued Genghis's work, although their expanded empire became politically fragmented into regional khanates in the absence of Genghis's single-minded forcefulness. Mongol hordes (the very word is of Mongolian origin) swept into today's Ukraine (the city of Kiev fell in 1240), Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary, as well as much of Anatolia, northern Syria, and Mesopotamia (Baghdad fell in 1258). Kublai Khan completed the Mongol conquest of China during the 1270s, just in time to greet Marco Polo on his famous expedition. After Kublai's death in 1294, the Mongol khanates disintegrated gradually over the next four centuries. The Beijing-based Yuan dynasty in China that Kublai had founded toppled in 1368 to Han Chinese rebels who founded the Ming dynasty.

Marco Polo was not the only Westerner to be fascinated by the Mongols and their extraordinary military achievements. Christians living in Muslim lands invaded by the Mongols tended to regard them as saviors, and during the mid-13th century there were rickety alliances involving Crusaders, Armenian Christians, and Mongol armies. About half of modern-day Mongolians are Buddhists, but during the Middle Ages they (including Genghis himself) mostly practiced animistic shamanism, although they were famously tolerant of other religions, as long as their adherents made no trouble and paid the required tribute. Indeed, a significant minority of Mongols were Nestorian Christians (Kublai's mother was one), which contributed to the Mongols' relatively high repute in the West. Chaucer set one of his Canterbury Tales, the unfinished Squire's Tale, in the "court" of Genghis Khan, although Genghis himself, raised in the rough herdsman culture of the steppes, would not have recognized the fanciful refinements with which Chaucer adorned his story. It was not until the reign of Kublai, who immersed himself in Chinese culture, that Mongol rulers began to live in palaces instead of felt tents and

Charlotte Allen is author of The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus.

developed sophisticated systems of administration and manners.

The spirit of the Squire's Tale lived on in the 1956 movie *The Conqueror*, loosely borrowed from the *Secret History* and starring John Wayne as Genghis and Susan Hayward as his wife Borte, the latter performing an alluring scarves-and-swords dance unknown to the medieval Mongols. The year 1965 saw the release of *Genghis Khan*, starring Omar Sharif, with Catherine Deneuve's sister, Françoise Dorléac, playing Borte. There have also been novels aplenty fictionalizing the great khan, his rise to power, and his love life. Conn Iggulden's trilogy—*Genghis: Birth of an Empire* (2007), *Genghis: Lords of the Bow* (2008), and the just-published *Genghis: Bones of the Hills* (Delacorte, 416 pp., $25)—marks the latest effort to treat the exploits of the Mongol strongman in novelistic form.

The Mongols were able to forge together their huge territories at high speed partly because they could move swiftly (their warriors could survive for two weeks, if need be, on pouches of dried milk-curds and blood from their own horses, so they did not need supply lines) and possessed excellent weaponry, often adopted from the peoples they conquered; and partly because they were utterly ruthless. It was never a good idea to cross, much less double-cross, a Mongol, and to show mercy was to show weakness. Those who surrendered to Genghis Khan bloodlessly merely had to pay tribute; those who did not might at best be enslaved (after their armies were put to the sword), and at worst slaughtered down to the last man, woman, and child, as an example to other conquered subjects of Genghis who might get ideas about skipping next year's tribute.

I remember reading with horrified fascination when I was a teenager about the fate that befell a city that defied Genghis: His men piled all the residents young and old into a mound, covered the living human heap with plaster, and rode off while the victims suffocated. I don't know whether that story is true, but it is certainly consonant with other well-attested stories of the Mongol proclivity for mass reprisals, their proclivity for amassing the skulls of their enemies, and the imaginatively cruel deaths they devised for those they especially disliked. The Muslim governor of the Silk Road city of Otrar had molten silver poured into his ears and eyes on Genghis's order as a prelude to the razing of Otrar to the ground and the annihilation of its inhabitants. Genghis's leisurely sieges, designed to produce maximum suffering, were especially nasty. The Mongol modus operandi—employed when Genghis conquered Beijing in 1215—was to burn the surrounding grain fields, divert the rivers, and then mass troops outside the walls feasting for months off their herds and practicing archery while the doomed residents inside the walls, who could see the merriment outside, slowly starved to death (Beijing finally surrendered, but Genghis's troops burned it down and obliterated its inhabitants anyway).

The one thing to be said for that aspect of Genghis's regime was that the crime rate was exceedingly low, the way it was when the Gambino family ruled the Brooklyn waterfront. "To the right of Genghis Khan" is the way the political cliché goes, but in fact Genghis's tactics for gaining and wielding power—mass killings, deliberate starvation, indifference to the suffering of innocents, and wholesale reprisals against not only those who offended him but their entire families—more closely resembled those of that other steppe-based master of ruthlessness, Joseph Stalin. (The shape and scope of the Mongol empire, stretching across all of Asia into Eastern Europe, also bore an eerie resemblance to the holdings of the Soviets and their East Asian Communist allies at the height of the Cold War.)

Lately, perhaps in the interests of the Third World-friendliness on which academics pride themselves these days, there has been an effort to rehabilitate Genghis Khan's image. Revisionist histories such as Jack Weatherford's *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (2004) and John Man's *Genghis Khan: Life, Death, Resurrection* (2005) tend to downplay Genghis's reported brutalities as exaggerations by hostile chroniclers and encourage readers to think of him as an enlightened leader who merely did what he had to do to make his people rise above their tribal squabbles, and whose swordpoint-enforced Pax Mongoliana in Central Asia paved the way for Western Europeans to enjoy such fruits of Eastern civilization as paper and the abacus. Genghis has been turned into an early feminist (even though he and the rest of the Mongol warriors practiced polygamy and considered the rape of captive women to be one of their job perks) and a promoter of equality before the law and religious freedom.

Mongolians these days regard Genghis ("Chinggis" in modern pronunciation) as their George Washington, with a giant statue of him in Ulaanbaatar. The beautifully filmed 2007 movie *Mongol* was very much in this spirit of the softer side of Genghis, with the Christlike Japanese actor Tadanobu Asano playing a khan more sinned against than sinning, a family man who dotes on Borte (the exquisite Khulan Chuluun) and frolics with his children on the grasslands.

THE VIEW

The scarlet torches of crape myrtle
Crowd my window, kindled by the sun.
Their thick foliage blocks my view

Of all but the treetops and the sky.
I enjoy the flower-clusters, and butterflies
That visit here, green midges, and bees

That traffic in nectar and yellow pollen.
I might still learn economy or lore
From their abrupt, impulsive intimacy.

But I am jealous of the light that's lost
To these gorgeous interlopers that began
Five years ago and twenty feet below

As blooming shrubs against the wall.
I remember the castle in a fairy tale,
Overgrown with brambles, trees, and vines,

Fallen under a curse, or witch's spell,
Lost to the world for years, impenetrable—
A house where only sleep was possible.

I cannot see the garden for the flowers.
Time to throw open the sash. Be merciless!
Out with the shears, off with their pretty heads.

—DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

Iggulden's trilogy, a feat of rousing, adventure-packed storytelling, is a welcome antidote to such romanticizing. Iggulden tries to have his readers understand Genghis as a military and organizational genius who was nonetheless emotionally stunted and morally flawed. Iggulden makes his fictional Genghis a complex and almost sympathetic character by placing his ruthlessness and unrelenting ambition in the context of the unforgiving Mongolian landscape and a tribal culture in which brutality to rivals was routine and death was the penalty for the most minor infractions.

Iggulden's books are novels, not histories; as he freely admits in his afterwords, he bends the facts narrated in the *Secret History* and elsewhere, and even invents characters, in order to suit his novelistic purposes. In Iggulden's telling, young Temujin's soul is forged at age 13, when his father is poisoned by Tartars and he, his mother, his four brothers, and his infant sister are abandoned on a windswept plain to die by a rival of his father's who takes over the boy's tribe and seizes the family's property. Within days, as the boys scramble to hunt down food, Temujin learns—or teaches himself—that killing without mercy is the way to survive in a murderous world that is as indifferent to the suffering of women and children as his own tribe was to his fatherless family. His first act in exile is to slay his older brother, like Cain, and become leader of his family after he discovers that the brother, Bektar, is secretly eating the small animals he shoots instead of sharing them with his starving mother and siblings (in the histories Bektar is only a half-brother and the hunting murder is more ambiguous).

Revenge, along with a desire to smash the tribal rivalries that led to his family's brush with death on the plains, is the chief motivating factor for Iggulden's Temujin as he grows to manhood, shrewdly picks out loyal generals and creates an army out of fellow outcasts, and maneuvers himself by intelligence and brute force to become head of the Mongols. When a band of Tartars abducts and rapes a pregnant Borte, Temujin personally tracks the men down, cuts out the beating heart of the chief assailant, and roasts and eats it. As Genghis Khan he becomes a master of the "cold face," the submerging of emotion so as to provoke mortal fear, and hence, respect and obedience.

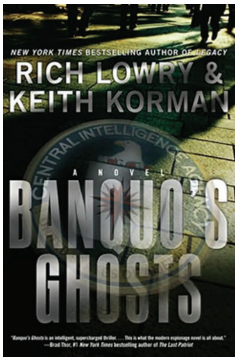
Genghis, in Iggulden's telling, is a man of courage and honor who despises the trappings of wealth, rewards loyalty among his men, and fiercely protects his family. He is also, however, a man whose craving to obliterate every living thing that asserts itself against him cannot be controlled. He insists on believing, for example, that his eldest son, Jochi, is the offspring of a Tartar rapist, and so cannot bring himself to love the boy, who is in fact his father's true heir in brains, bravery, and innate nobility. When a fed-up Jochi, yearning for a father's affection that never comes, finally leaves his father's camp with a cadre of warriors, Genghis, in Iggulden's telling, has him tracked down and killed. In the end, as the skillfully narrated Mongol battles become ever larger in scale and more numerous, the bloodbaths (because the Mongols almost always win) get more bloody, and the numbers of innocent women and children massacred rise to genocidal levels, Genghis's propensities ultimately prove to be his mortal undoing. The Genghis Khan that Iggulden creates is, finally, a tragic figure.

The Dangerous Book for Boys became a No. 1 bestseller in 2007 because it offered, in an increasingly feminized world in which girls are supposed to be role models for both sexes, a chance for boys to be boys. On its pages they could learn how to do things that boys like to do—grow crystals, build fires, make paper airplanes, design a working bow and arrow, learn about dinosaurs and the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—things designed to build their competence and self-confidence and help them grow into men. Iggulden's Genghis novels are a kind of fictionalized *Dangerous Book*, loaded with the lore of warfare, horsemanship, strategy, and exotic geography and history, along with the perils as well as the virtues of an unrelenting ethos of manliness. (Warning note to parents: Although there is no explicit sex in the books, Iggulden's Mongol warriors, like their historical counterparts, have hearty carnal appetites, and that, along with the violence, makes them unsuitable for young children. I suspect that older teens would love them.)

Iggulden's take on Genghis Khan could be all wrong, and the real Genghis might have been simply a power-hungry 13th-century thug. After reading Iggulden's trilogy, I hope not. He is now said to be working on a similar set of novels about Kublai Khan, and I can't wait for their publication. **NR**

On *Our* Side

OTTO PENZLER


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF LEGACY
RICH LOWRY & KEITH KORMAN
A NOVEL
BANQUO'S GHOSTS

Banquo's Ghosts, by Rich Lowry and Keith Korman (Vanguard, 368 pp., $25.95)

William F. Buckley Jr. wrote a successful series of espionage thrillers about Blackford Oakes, a CIA agent. Now National Review editor Rich Lowry (together with his friend Keith Korman) has leaped into the same genre pool, with *Banquo's Ghosts*.

One of the hallmarks of the Blackford Oakes series was the author's quirky and effective practice of mingling real-life characters with his fictional creations. Lowry and Korman do the same thing, with one significant difference: While Buckley's historical figures often were of gigantic significance in the second half of the 20th century, Lowry and Korman's are intellectual and philosophical pygmies. It is virtually impossible, after all, to make caricatures of the intellectually challenged Larry King, the relentlessly inept Chris Matthews, the accuracy-handicapped Seymour Hersh, and the emperor of smug bloviation, Keith Olbermann. (It is to Lowry's credit that Olbermann once named him "the worst person in the world.")

Like all good fiction, *Banquo's Ghosts* is about more than it seems to be at first glance. As a pure thriller, though, it's a doozy. Here's the plot: A rogue CIA agent reaches the conclusion that the only way

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to stop Iran's dream of producing nuclear warheads is to eliminate the one scientist mainly responsible for developing the program. What may seem an extreme action to some is merely agent Stewart Bancroft's solution to what has been treated as an insurmountable problem by the rest of the world. Bancroft runs a tiny office in Rockefeller Center for the CIA. He has taken the undercover name Stewart Banquo and, with his indomitable associate, Robert Wallets, he understands his mission is to win the war. It doesn't matter which war, and it matters even less what methods are employed to achieve the goal. Banquo is a real spy, he has been in real wars, and he has used every kind of agent to help him. These agents are his ghosts.

The man he plans to use to assassinate the irreplaceable Iranian nuclear scientist is Peter Johnson, an extreme-left journalist, a drunk who is as corrupt as he is dissolute, so foul that he could pollute the water upstream. Lowry and Korman devote numerous passages to Johnson's media interviews—and these will be infuriating to intelligent readers, because they are so pitch-perfectly accurate that they can pass for verbatim transcripts from the MSNBC/CBS/PBS echo chamber. Immediately after the 9/11 attacks on New York, Johnson's editor at *The Crusader* (a magazine funded by George Soros) asks him to write 750 words on why America is so hateable. (One of his friends is writing a hit piece on the American-flag pin: "the McCarthyism of America's lapels, disgracing the country's jackets with a simulacrum of patriotism.")

On *Larry King Live*, he is introduced as the "daring" journalist who has visited Iran to report on its attempts to become a nuclear power. Asked how he's being treated, he responds, "Fine. I think they're glad to have someone listening to them for once." When pressed about "nuke or no nuke," Johnson replies: "Unequivocally, no nuke, Larry. . . . This is another put-on, another confabulation by the same people who always lust after another good war."

For a brief moment, I thought the authors had overdone Johnson's liberal rhetoric, that it had become parody. Then I happened to pick up a copy of *Time* magazine—and, sure enough, there was a column by Patrick Leahy, calling for an investigation and, it was abundantly clear, also hoping for a prosecution of members of the last administration for "the abuses of the Bush years." (The article was accompanied by yet another photo of Abu Ghraib.) In the same issue, there was Joe Klein's usual fair and measured column, this one about global reaction to Obama being "euphoric" and how much better relations are with the Muslim world than they were during the Bush years. I searched as meticulously as a chimpanzee looking for fleas for a single paragraph anywhere in the magazine with an alternative point of view, without success.

I returned to the novel, chastened.

Banquo and Wallets are able to convince Johnson to undertake the dangerous mission into Iran, mainly because of his love for his daughter, Giselle, who was so horrified and confused when she watched the Twin Towers crack open and crumble, asking him "Why did they do this? Why?" The question, perhaps for the first time in his worthless life, gave him pause.

Because of his non-stop berating of America, Johnson is the only journalist given access to Iran's nuclear facilities (for peaceful purposes, of course), with the expectation that the ensuing journalism will prove to the free world that no threat exists except in the jingoistic minds of a few of America's leaders. Inevitably, when an amateur tries to play a professional's game, it's bound to go terribly wrong, and it does.

A lot happens but, since this is a plot-driven thriller, you won't find out what it is here. Suffice it to say that Banquo is more interested in victory than in following the standard CIA manual for castratos, America's nightmarish little gift from Jimmy Carter, his CIA chief, Stansfield Turner, and Sen. Frank Church—men who somehow thought it was a good idea to eviscerate the agency, downsizing it by 800 field operatives, and then were surprised when Iranian "students" invaded the U.S. embassy in Iran. Bureaucrats always despise men of action, so naturally Banquo's superior (let me rephrase that—his boss) in Washington hated the idea of taking out the scientist because it was illegal, because it didn't follow procedure, and because he hated Banquo.

Banquo and Wallets are competent, handsome, courageous, moral Americans—heroic figures who could have been fashioned by Ayn Rand—and it is to be hoped that they will make further appearances. They are the type of men who used to play the lead roles in World War II movies, when Hollywood was still on America's side.

Banquo and Wallets are the type of men who used to play the lead roles in World War II movies, when Hollywood was still on America's side.

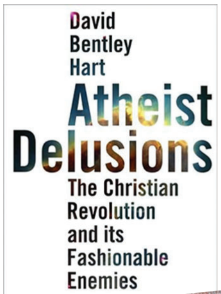
The authors of *Banquo's Ghosts* have a clarity of vision that has been lacking in much espionage fiction since the conclusion of World War II. For years, only the great Charles McCarry eschewed the moral ambivalence so prevalent in the work of such otherwise talented authors as John le Carré and Graham Greene, both of whom considered their native England every bit as guilty of despicable acts as its enemy, the Soviet Union. Such American writers as James Grady (*Six Days of the Condor*, in which the CIA callously murders a group of its own operatives in order to keep a secret) and David Ignatius (*Body of Lies*, in which every American is shown to be hopelessly stupid or corrupt) were no less tainted by moral equivalency.

Fortunately, the literary pendulum has recently swung back to a more patriotic vision, or at least a more honest one, in the works of such bestselling authors as Vince Flynn, Stephen Hunter, Andrew Klavan, and Brad Thor.

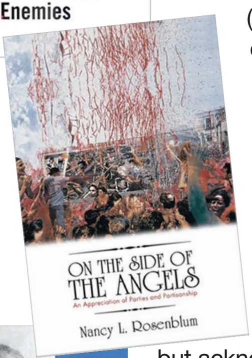
Let's face it: Being asked to review a book co-authored by the editor of NATIONAL REVIEW *for* NATIONAL REVIEW is a tough assignment. What a relief it was to learn that, despite some of the repetition and rhetorical excess (though excess can be exhilarating, because it prevents moderation from acquiring the deadening effect of habit), *Banquo's Ghosts* is a true thriller—a fine novel by authors who understand the difference between good and evil and are unashamed to take a position on the side of the former. **NR**

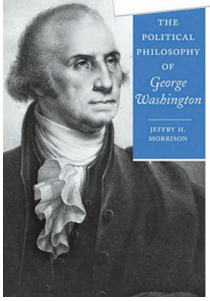
Shelf Life

David Bentley Hart is one of the most valuable theologians of recent years; his 2003 book *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* is a masterpiece. The title of his latest work, ***Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*** (Yale, 253 pp., $28), leads the reader to expect a scathing polemic against Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Christopher Hitchens, and other writers of the same genre. But while the book does provide some strong invective against the New (actually, not so new) Atheists, it has an importance out of proportion to its occasion. Dawkins et al. are like the irritant that prompts the secretion of a pearl.



What Hart does in this book is set forth a sweeping, and convincing, counternarrative to the story of Western civilization told by the atheist propagandists. Far from being an obscurantist obstacle to human fulfillment, he writes, Christianity actually invented the idea of humanity as we understand it today. Before the Christ event, a confrontation like that between Pilate and Jesus would have been seen much differently—as an appropriate restoration of cosmic and social order, in which the powerful are vindicated and the weak crushed. After that event, writes Hart, "try though we might, we shall never really be able to see Christ's broken, humiliated, and doomed humanity as something self-evidently contemptible and ridiculous. . . . [We now] see it as encompassing the very mystery of our own humanity: a sublime fragility, at once tragic and magnificent, pitiable and wonderful." Nietzsche was right in considering this a profoundly subversive view, and we in our time fail to see how scandalous it is only because it is so much a part of our spiritual heritage. Writes Hart: "We have lost the capacity for innocent callousness. . . . We cannot *simply* and guilelessly avert our eyes from the abasement of the victim in order to admire the grandeur of his persecutor; and for just this reason we lack any immediate consciousness of the radical inversion of perspective that has occurred."


On the Side of the Angels
An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship
Nancy L. Rosenblum



Hart points out that this new valuation of humanity-in-itself—not just particular human beings who are especially brilliant, bold, or strong—is grounded in the theological claims about Christ, whose "descent from the 'form of God' into the 'form of a slave' is not so much a paradox as a perfect confirmation of the indwelling of the divine image in each soul. . . . Once the world has been seen in this way, it can never again be what it formerly was."

The sadness of pagan antiquity—of a fixed, closed, tragic world order—gave way to a world in which the lowest could be liberated into a joyful communion with God. Pope John Paul II loved to quote from a particular Vatican II document the assertion that Christ did not just reveal God to man, but "reveals man to man"; Hart's book is a profound essay on this theme, and the revolution wrought in history by this new understanding of intrinsic human dignity.

■ "Parties and partisanship are indisputably orphans of political philosophy," writes Nancy L. Rosenblum; and it's easy to see why this is so. How many self-conscious intellectuals are there who don't actively strive for a viewpoint above partisanship (or, at the very least, claim to)? The danger, of course, is that a commitment to purity in pursuit of truth can lead one to undervalue the efforts and achievements in pursuit of the public good on the part of frankly committed advocates of limited points of view—that is to say, of partisans. In ***On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship*** (Princeton, 588 pp., $29.95), Rosenblum—chairman of Harvard's government department—explains that partisans are central to the functioning of representative democracy's system of "regulated rivalry": "Partisanship is the political identity that does not see pluralism and political conflict as a bow to necessity. This commitment entails political self-restraint, mental and emotional discipline, for partisans see themselves as firmly on the side of the angels, but acknowledge their partiality."

The partisan process does more than merely promote these democratic virtues; it generates practical results for the broader political system. "Parties do not adopt fully developed conceptions of justice that exist antecedent to political activity. Parties are creative agents, and active partisans [take the initiative] in bringing [new lines of division] to public awareness." To improve our public life, suggests Rosenblum, it would be better to focus on improving the quality of partisanship than to continue to indulge the view that independence and nonpartisanship offer a more promising solution.

■ In ***The Political Philosophy of George Washington*** (Johns Hopkins, 226 pp., $40), Regent University government professor Jeffry H. Morrison traces the Founding Father's thought to three sources—"classical republicanism, British liberalism, and Protestant Christianity." The book is a brief but convincing appreciation of a mind that has been undervalued, even as Washington's many other virtues have caused him to be near-universally recognized as "the indispensable man."

—MICHAEL POTEMRA

City Desk

Open City

RICHARD BROOKHISER

THE city is full of windows. More buildings, more stories, more rooms equal more panes of glass. The windowless room is a horror, which the laws aimed to banish from residential buildings: hence the city's many airshafts and courtyards. Every New Yorker should be able to see light and air, even if the light is dim and the air is dirty. Modern office buildings achieve the same result by eliminating interior walls on their vast floors. The reason your cubicle foxhole does not reach all the way to the ceiling is not only to deprive you of privacy, but to enable you, with a crick of the neck, to look 20 yards and glimpse the sun dazzle off the windows of the office building across the street.

Whenever anyone can look out, someone else can also look in. Voyeurism is the most unavoidable sin of city life, unless it is exhibitionism. I have looked up from my bedroom desk, which looks out a window, and seen, not just water towers and pigeons, but a young woman taking a shower. It was one of those moments when you say to yourself: "Heavens." Hadn't she heard of curtains? But people who look in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

Animals are more often visible in windows than people. Birds in their cages have little choice but to stay put, though cats seem to favor a post on the sill. Dogs rarely show themselves; although they love car windows, perhaps the lack of motion in a city apartment bores them. For many years the townhouse in Greenwich Village that replaced the building demolished by Bill Ayers and his friends had a teddy bear in one of its windows. I think its costume changed with the seasons. It was a decorator's idea which, happily, proved to be a passing thing, more passing, unhappily, than Ayers.

At night the windows of the city glow with TV screens. They wink in darkened rooms like the crystals in *The Lord of the Rings* in which, if you weren't careful, you got face time with Sauron. From afar all you see are blocks of color, giving way to other blocks in a series of clicks; the sight gives new life to the expression "motion picture," though at a long enough distance all the pictures are abstract. Sometimes it's good to step back, way back, and see what an art form, or a time-waster, or something that is sometimes one, sometimes the other, looks like. If you were in the room, close up, you might fall under the spell. The lure of enchantment is unevenly distributed: My wife will sit in front of a program she wanted to see, and end up reading the newspaper; I find myself rooted by other people's tripe. That's why I never watch television, unless I'm on it, or unless it's behind somebody else's window.

MEREDITH HEUER

The most poignant rooms are the empty ones. Since most of my window watching is done from the sidewalk, I look up at a lot of ceilings. The eye is drawn to light fixtures—circular old tubes, or long straight ones mounted between reflective baffles, or single bulbs held in mesh baskets like the ends of lacrosse sticks. The night lights in offices are softer than the night lights in stairwells. Janitors and people evacuating in an emergency will just have to shade their eyes. Yet most of the life of stairwell bulbs is spent shining on nothing. They also serve who only stand and glare. In schoolrooms you can glimpse maps of the world, still using those Mercator projections with huge Greenland and tiny Ecuador. In one neighborhood school, until rather recently, I could see George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, looking from the past—two pasts: the time in which he was painted, and the time in which it was thought needful to hang the painting. Other windows show structural details—pipes, or the underside of staircases. Every year, someone must go from floor to floor, room to room, painting them, or they would be covered with dust like fur.

The empty room, framed by darkness, is without drama—which means it might be the scene of any action. It holds the suppressed excitement of anticipation. Looking at empty windows is like the moment in a theater, after you have found your seat, and you turn to see the props and scenery of the first act. Who will sit on that chair? There is a coat rack—so someone will come in from outside. You think these thoughts even of the stripped-down sets of *Our Town* or *Endgame*, because you know the bareness will soon be populated. It is like the similar moment in a concert hall when all you see is chairs, with a few instruments too bulky to be sauntered in—double basses, kettle drums. Or perhaps all the stage holds is a piano. You study the mechanism of the pedals, or the way the light slides over its black curve. Sound will fill you in a moment, this is the quiet before. It is like first walking into a bookstore, and seeing the hard covers that co-op money has placed on the front tables, beckoning with their fashionable fonts and artfully clipped photographs. If they could speak, they would say "Buy me"; if they could speak well, they would say "Read me—someone has put years into this." Looking at empty windows is like looking at women we will never speak to, much less embrace. Each one has a story, and it isn't yours.

Down my block is a twelve-story building, shaped like an L. In the angle is a much smaller building. Either the small building had a taller predecessor, or the larger building feared one, because the walls of the angle are blank, except for three small windows, just below the roof. Two are on the shorter wall, one is on the longer wall. They look at each other and nothing. Edward Hopper couldn't do better. **NR**

Happy Warrior BY MARK STEYN

Closing Up Shop

As National Review's in-house demography bore—oh, hang on, the self-deprecating "demography bore" shtick is getting even more boring than just boring on about demography . . . Well, okay, usually I bore on about it, as my detractors have it, in the head-for-the-hills-the-Muzzies-are-coming sense. So, just for a change, here's the Subprime Bailout Variations of my same old demographic song.

Take a "toxic asset." What would improve its current pitiful value? That's easy: More demand. Less supply. An asset is only an asset as long as there's a buyer willing to buy it. If you've got 50 houses and 100 would-be homeowners, that's good for property prices. If you've got 100 houses and 50 would-be homeowners, that's not so good.

Which is the situation much of the developed world is facing. A bank is a kind of demographic shorthand, by which old people with capital lend to young people with ambition and ideas. Unfortunately, the Western world is running out of young people. Japan, Germany, and Russia are already in net population decline. Fifty percent of Japanese women born in the Seventies are childless. Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of Spanish women childless at the age of 30 almost doubled, from just over 30 percent to just shy of 60 percent. In Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, 20 percent of 40-year-old women are childless. In Germany, 30 percent of *all* women are childless. In a recent poll, invited to state the "ideal" number of children, 16.6 percent of Germans answered "None."

Adding to the national debt presupposes that there'll be someone to pay it off. But what if there isn't?

Chacun à son goût. But, in the macroeconomic picture, who's going to be around to buy your assets? Mark Twain commended the purchase of land because "they're not making any more of it." But, in the fast-depopulating eastern half of Germany, they've made more than anyone's going to need for the foreseeable future. *Pace* the Führer, no country has ever been less in need of Lebensraum.

Now look at it from a business point of view. In the United States, depending on what line of work you're in, your sales territory may be your town or your state or the whole of America. But for Germany, Italy, and Japan, their only viable sales territory is the world. When your median age is 43 and rising, any economic growth is down to exports. Wall Street experts talk about restoring "consumer confidence," but in much of Europe they won't restore "confidence" until they restore consumers—i.e., figure out a way to generate sufficient numbers of them. Until then, the domestic market is maxed out.

So now consider it from a German banker's point of view. To whom do you lend money? With age distribution on your turf heading north relentlessly, there's not enough young people close to home. So you go farther and farther afield. Not crazy farther, not Sudan or Rwanda. But far enough that you're operating in markets where your traditional forms of risk analysis don't apply, even if you were minded to apply them. To Western bankers, Eastern Europe didn't seem that different or dangerous, if you steered clear of the more psychotic oligarchs. Alas, the post-Soviet East is even farther down the demographic death spiral than you are, and the Continental lenders' exposure is such that the Eastern European downturn could bring about the collapse of the entire Western European banking system.

So, from the individual homeowner with no one to sell his home to, and the business that's run out of domestic market, and the bank frantically loaning to jurisdictions it barely comprehends, nudge it up one last stage—to the state. In recessions, government is enjoined to spend—to go into deficit, ramp up the national debt in order to "stimulate" the economy. Adding to the national debt presupposes that there'll be someone to pay it off. But what if there isn't?

In contrast to Washington's, almost all Tokyo's huge national debt is domestically held. But Japan is the oldest society on earth. Will there be enough Japanese to buy all that debt? Or Germans and Italians? And, if you turn to the other available buyers of Western debt out there, do the Chinese Communists and the Saudi oil sheiks already know the answer to that question? The recent failure of the British Treasury auction, two similar flops in Germany, and a very near miss in the U.S. all prefigure a world with too much debt and too few sugar daddies willing to cover it.

Whenever I write about demography, I usually get a ton of responses from folks saying: What's so bad about falling population? Japan, Belgium, and the like are pretty congested: Wouldn't it be nice to have a bit more elbow room? Sure. With the rise of mill towns in the south and the opening up of the west, the population of my small municipality in New Hampshire peaked in the 1820 census, declined till 1940 and still hasn't caught up to where it was 200 years ago. But it didn't matter, because we were a self-contained rural economy with no welfare and no public debt. If Japan and Germany were run like 19th-century Granite State townships, they'd be okayish. But they're not, so they won't be. You can't hunker down behind national borders when there aren't enough young people inside the perimeter with a sufficient level of consumption to grow the economy at the rate necessary to cover existing government obligations.

This is the first crisis of globalization, and it is a far more existential threat than the Depression. In living beyond its means, its times, and its borders, the developed world has run out of places to pass the buck. **NR**

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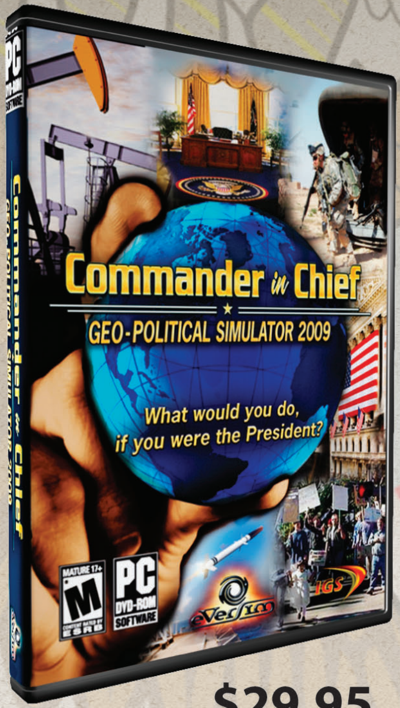
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